Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs History Project Labor Series

ANTHONY G. FREEMAN

Interviewed by: Don Kienzle

Initial Interview date: February 7, 1995

Q: This is Don Kienzle. Today is Tuesday, February 7, 1995, and I have the pleasure this morning of interviewing Anthony G. Freeman, a long-time Foreign Service Officer and until November 1994, the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Coordinator International Labor Affairs (S/IL). Thank you very much, Tony, for agreeing to participate in our Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project.

FREEMAN:My pleasure, Don.

Q: Shall we begin with your personal background, where you came from, your education, etc?

FREEMAN: I'm from New Jersey. I did most of my schooling in New Jersey. I was born in Newark and went to high school in East Orange, New Jersey. I did my undergraduate work at Rutgers University. I spent one year at the main campus in New Brunswick and finished up the last three years in Newark. My degree was a bachelor of arts in the social sciences - history, economics, and politics. Immediately after college I had a fellowship for the summer to come down here to Washington to attend the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University. They had a program in Mediterranean and Maghreb affairs. That was the summer of 1956. Immediately thereafter I volunteered for the draft and was in the Army for almost two years in Kentucky, Texas and Germany. When I came out of the Army, I received a fellowship to attend the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University for a two year masters program in what they called "public affairs." I stayed on a third year in the Politics Department and was contemplating doing my doctorate there, but in the meantime I took the Foreign Service exam and decided that I had enough school and wanted to get to work. I came to Washington in mid-1961 and joined the Foreign Service.

Q: Did your family have a labor background of any kind?

FREEMAN: No. My immediate family did not. My father was in the auto parts industry; he was a salesman and distributor of auto parts. I cannot say that I had any real association with organized labor except by empathy. My grandfather on my father's side was a bootmaker and laborer who had immigrated from Hungary. My mother's family came from Paterson, New Jersey, which had been a major textile center. The Triangle Fire tragedy in lower Manhattan was something we all learned about from an early age. I had many, many part-time jobs myself and paid my way through high school and college, but have to admit none of those were union jobs. [Laughter]

Q: No union card?

FREEMAN: Sorry to say I didn't have a union card. I worked on the docks in Port Newark and didn't have a union card.

Q: Was any of your academic work in the area of international labor?

FREEMAN: I cannot say that it was. I have to think back myself as to how I developed an interest in labor affairs, and frankly, it is a bit hazy to me. I did elect a course at Rutgers on domestic American labor issues, but the professor was not inspiring. I would say that probably there was some kind of social underpinning for this interest. Certainly I came from a family background in which we were strong supporters of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, and I think I had a good social consciousness all through my high school and college days. And, as far as I can recall, I was always sympathetic to the idea of organized labor. Also, my first job in Washington - one summer in the 1950s while I was still going to school - was at the Department of Labor verifying the wage slips of agricultural guest-workers from Mexico allowed in on the "bracero" program. I got that job through a Federal civil service-wide examination and the assignment to Labor may have been by accident, but probably there was an element of choice involved and I may have opted for this.

Following the Army and the Woodrow Wilson School, when I stayed on at Princeton for the third year in 1959-1960 to contemplate a doctoral dissertation, I began working on the idea of doing my thesis on the Alliance for Progress in Latin America. I wanted to concentrate on the social impact of the Alliance for Progress. I did some research before giving it up and deciding to go into the Foreign Service. So I had an interest in Latin America, and more specifically in social affairs in Latin America, before I came into the Foreign Service.

Then I joined the Foreign Service in 1961 and took the entry level training program at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). I was assigned on my first tour to Buenos Aires as a "central complement officer." I think that's what it was called.

Q: What time frame was this?

FREEMAN: I started in the Foreign Service in July of 1961, so by December of 1961 I was finished with the training program and language training and everything. And I was due to go out to Buenos Aires, but then I was caught in a travel freeze. So it isn't true that the screw-ups in the State Department are of recent vintage only. [Laughter]

There was a travel freeze because of delay in Congressional appropriations, I believe, at the end of 1961, so I was detailed to the State Department and my assignment to Buenos Aires was put off for six months. In the meantime, I was temporarily detailed to the Labor Advisor's Office in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA). During the time I was there, I signed up for an evening training program on domestic and international labor issues, once a week or something like that, at American University in which Murray Weisz was one of the teachers among others.

Q: Phil Kaiser?

FREEMAN: I don't remember Phil from that time, but Phil, I think, was the director of the program. And there were a few others whom I could identify if I went through the names. My classmates in this course were all taking it as part of their training preparing them for labor attache positions abroad to which they had already been assigned. Among these were Russ Olson and Roger Schrader, as I recall, but I'm not absolutely certain of that. For these officers, the labor training program was a full semester at American University, including night classes, but I just attended the night class, because I was working in my assignment in ARA during the day. So that was for four to six months or something like that during the time that we had the travel freeze.

The head of the ARA labor office at that time was Henry Hammond, who is since deceased. Henry was a fine gentleman, who came from the Labor Department and was a senior labor attachï¿½. He himself was being assigned to Buenos Aires in the July 1962 time frame, as labor attachï¿½. One of the major projects he had me work on in the ARA office was to do research on the Argentine trade union movement, and I did an in-depth paper on every personality there was. I had access to the relevant reporting from the field, of course, and everything that came across the State Department desks on Latin America. I did a detailed profile of the trade union movement and the political parties in Argentina, so by the time I got to Argentina myself in July 1962, I was extremely well- read on Argentine affairs. I knew the bios of all the characters I was going to meet when I got down there.

I say, "I was going to meet," but I am skipping something here, so let me backtrack. As I said earlier, I was assigned as a central complement officer, where you "rotate" from one section to another in the Embassy. But during the time that I was working for Henry Hammond, our Ambassador at that time to Argentina, Rob McClintock, came to Washington. I asked to meet with him, and an interesting thing happened, which had some impact on what my first assignment in Buenos Aires would be later on.

He came through Washington, among other reasons, to have a meeting at the AFL-CIO with Serafino Romualdi, Jessie Friedman's step-father. Now Serafino was a legend in those days. He had been a very active labor person during the War. He evidently had worked for the OSS in the labor area. He was an Italian Socialist who had fled Italy during Mussolini's time prior to the War. He had lived or worked in Latin America and had many Socialist friends from Italy who were in prominent places in the trade union movement and in politics in Latin America, for example, in Venezuela, Uruguay and Argentina, et cetera. And it had been a strong article of faith for Serafino as head oInter-American affairs of the AFL-CIO to oppose the Peronists, who came to power in Argentina and took control of the labor movement by pushing out the socialists and anarcho-syndicalists, with muggings and killings and so forth. So Serafino was a bitter, bitter enemy of Peronism, which he regarded as nothing more than a Latin American variety of Fascism, which he had been fighting all his adult life.

Well, McClintock aimed to persuade Serafino that the time had come for the AFL-CIO to begin a rapprochement with the Peronists, and the reason was, of course, that we were facing a problem called Castroism in those days. Castro communism supported by the Soviet Union was on the rise as a political model to be exported to and replicated in the other countries of Latin America. Castro sympathizers were penetrating political parties and labor movements throughout Latin America, and the Peronists were seen as a potential bulwark to the spread of Communism in Argentina. So from the United States' point of view, it was opportune to begin a better relationship with the Peronist movement. There had been a long history of hostility between the Peronists and the United States. Peronism was a kind of Third World populist nationalist movement that viewed the Yanquis with hostility. Peron, who was a demagogue, grandiosely portrayed his movement as being a "Third Way," not a bridge, but a third way between Capitalism and Communism, between Imperialism and Communism. But the Peronists were anti-Communist, so Ambassador McClintock saw value in trying to establish relations with the Peronist labor leaders, and in order to do that, he needed the support - or at least wanted to soften the opposition - of the AFL-CIO. So that was the purpose of the visit which Ambassador McClintock and Henry Hammond paid on Serafino Romualdi, with me tagging along. And incidentally that was the first time I met Jesse Friedman. Jessie was sitting in an outer office, and he immediately made an impression on me as a dynamic young international trade unionist activist doing really exciting work. However, the meeting was unsuccessful. Serafino rejected the Ambassador's arguments, at least at that time.

But during the course of the Ambassador's stay in Washington, I asked to meet with him. He asked what I wanted to do when I got down to Buenos Aires, and I said that I had been working in the ARA labor office, his idea of reconciliation with the Peronists seemed an exciting thing to do, and I would like to be involved. And so he said, "Fine. You've got the job." My first "rotation" assignment would be to the Embassy labor office, so that's how I got to be Assistant Labor Attachï¿½ in Buenos Aires, at least for the first six months that I was there.

Q: How did you find the labor movement once you arrived in Buenos Aires? Were you able to make any useful contacts with the Peronists?

FREEMAN: Oh, yes. It was a great assignment. I actually got down to Buenos Aires two weeks before Henry Hammond did. I don't know whether you want me to tell that story or not.

Q: Go right ahead.

FREEMAN: The Labor Attachï¿½ preceding Henry Hammond was a fellow named Irving Salert. Now, if I am not mistaken, Salert came from the ILG [International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union], and he was quite a character. I arrived in Buenos Aires, my first assignment, in July. It was winter time down there, and believe it or not there was actually snow coming down at the airport at around 11 o'clock at night when the plane came in. And even though it was my first assignment, I had learned it was the usual Foreign Service custom to meet [newly arriving] officers at the airport, so I was expecting to be met. But when I cleared customs, there was nobody there, and it was late at night. It was near midnight when I retrieved my bags, and I caught the last bus into town. It was quite cold with snow flurries coming down, not much snow, but it was unusual for Buenos Aires. I turned to another American on the bus, a businessman, and asked where he was going to stay that night. This was a Sunday night. He said, "Well, I am going to the Plaza Hotel." The Plaza Hotel was the most expensive hotel in town. I think it was $15 or $20 a night, and that was really a lot of money in those days. And I said, "Well, I guess I'm going there too; I don't know any other place." So I ended up at the Plaza, and when Monday morning came around, I decided I wasn't going to rush to the Embassy and report to duty. Instead, I would get to know the town first. I just walked around the city and in the afternoon I happened to stumble upon the American Embassy. By this time, the Personnel Officer, Gladys Knudson (may she rest in peace), was frantic. "Where have you been?," she asked.

It turned out that the Labor Attachï¿½, Mr. Salert, was supposed to have a car sent out to meet me at the airport. He had either forgotten or just didn't care. He hadn't notified the motor pool, so no one came to meet me. But I was assigned to his office, even though I was really going to work for Henry Hammond. This fellow [Salert] was still going to be around for another two weeks, so I paid my call on him. He was not apologetic at all. In fact, he was rather flippant, and said something like, "I don't know who the hell you are." Actually, he was a lot more explicit than that. "I didn't ask for you. I'm only going to be here two more weeks. There's an office across the hall. Park your ass over there, and keep the fuck out of my way." [Laughter]

So that was my first introduction to the Foreign Service overseas.

Q: Loy Henderson would not have approved.

FREEMAN: Actually, the guy warmed up after that. He took me around on some of his labor calls, and I sat in on some of his meetings. I had a hard time understanding Salert's Spanish. I understood the Argentines, but couldn't understand him. Only later I realized Salert was speaking Portuguese - he wasn't speaking Spanish - and that's why I didn't understand him. He had spent five years in Brazil before serving another five in Argentina, and he still spoke Portuguese. He was an interesting curmudgeon type, and I learned some things from him.

In any case, Henry Hammond arrived shortly thereafter, and we began, for the first time, to court the Peronist labor movement. And the Peronists were ready to be courted. There was a "soft line" [faction] that wanted to work with us. Now I have since discovered that some of these guys were actually intelligence agents of the Argentine government. On my second tour to Argentina some years later, one of the earliest contacts I had made the first time around confessed to me that he (and others) were actually working for state security at that time when they approached us as intermediaries for the Peronist labor/political movement. These were secondary characters. I'm not talking (necessarily) about the trade union leaders themselves. While I was still in my 6-month labor tour, Henry Hammond began to contact the major trade union figures, and the most important one I met with him was the head of the garment workers union named Jose Alonso, who was later assassinated during the guerilla war which they had there. These were the "soft-liners" in the Peronist movement as they were called. While they were Peronist and professed allegiance to General Peron who was in exile abroad, they were being wooed and cultivated by the Government of Arturo Frondizi, a democratically elected President from another party, the UCRI (a split off from Argentina's main traditional middle class party, the Radicals, who were the principal rivals of the Peronists). Frondizi, through one of his Ministers, Rogelio Frigerio (Economy, I believe), sought to coopt as many of the Peronist labor leaders as they could. Frondizi was a major partner in the Alliance for Progress with the United States, and undoubtedly through his Minister Frigerio, the soft-line Peronists were encouraged to work with us - with the implication that the labor movement could benefit from US Alliance for Progress programs. I'm not saying necessarily this was the only motivation these Peronists had to be receptive to a closer relationship with the U.S., but it undoubtedly was an important sweetener. In any case, I was among the first Americans to get to meet these people and develop a relationship with them as part of Henry Hammond's mission, and I'm still remembered in some circles in Argentina because I was in on the ground floor of that development, even though I only worked in the labor office for six months. I had great fun doing it.

Q: Was this effort eventually accepted by the AFL-CIO?

FREEMAN:Yes, with or without Serafino's personal endorsement, the AFL-CIO came to recognize that they had to work with the Peronists also and that the Peronists weren't necessarily Fascists. They were opportunistic; they were demagogic; they weren't "nice guys" or necessarily democratic by our definition, but they were definitely populists, and they did represent the underside of society in Argentina. Many of these guys who were trade union leaders came out of the sweatshops and factories themselves and they were born on "the wrong side of the tracks". Not too soon thereafter, the AFL-CIO position began evolving also. About a year later, an AIFLD program was established. An office was set up in Buenos Aires, and they began working with the Peronists also, using AID Alliance for Progress funds to engage in housing construction programs for the light and power workers and other unions. But at the same time the remnants of the old Socialist (or social democratic) movement were still around here and there. AIFLD probably maintained contact with them as well, as did we. I kept up my contacts with the Socialists, social democrats and other anti-Peronists grouped together in an entity which they called the "32 democratic unions", and there was a tremendous amount of emotion on the part of these old timers over the fact that the Americans were beginning to work with the Peronists. I recall the head of this organization, Juan Carlos Brunetti, a "social democratic" type who was a member of the UCRP, the mainstream Radical Party, pulling Jessie Friedman aside one day when Jessie was visiting down there with a delegation from the AFL-CIO, grabbing him by the lapel and saying, "Your step-father is turning over in his grave for what you're doing, Jessie!" And Jessie was shaken by that.

Q: What was the relative power between the Peronists on the one hand and the social democrats on the other?

FREEMAN: Something like 99.4 percent to 0.6 percent. They may have once had 32 unions, but by this time the "32 democratic unions" were little more than a letterhead.

Q: So the Socialists were a small faction.

FREEMAN: They were a very small faction by that time, but there were still some old great leaders left. There were several leaders still active in the 1960s who came from this tradition and who were actually still in the national leadership of some unions: the Railway Engineers, for example, and also the Commercial Workers. There were some great old time 1930s style democratic or anarcho-syndicalist trade union leaders, but they soon lost their positions.Q: Were the Peronist trade unionists independent of the government or were they really subordinate?

FREEMAN: There has been an off again-on again tendency among the heads of the Argentine trade unions in the CGT to split between "soft-liners" more inclined to deal with the government of the moment and "hard-liners" inclined to be in more intransigent opposition. The "soft-liners" in the period I'm talking about were probably coopted by the Frondizi government to some extent, but I doubt they were totally subordinate. Insofar as the relationship between the Peronist trade union leaders and the broad Peronist political movement, the labor leaders were a power factor within the broader movement, but they represented an interest in and of themselves. There was a mutual relationship between the party leaders and union leaders, but the union guys were to a considerable degree autonomous and exercised their own influence on party politics. But they were split, too; they were deeply ridden by factionalism and personal rivalries.

One can debate how significant this U.S. opening to the Peronist labor movement was in the greater scheme of things. It broke down the mutual reserve and suspicions between the US and Argentine labor movement and reduced to some (probably a considerable) degree traditional Peronist resentment against the U.S. AIFLD (AFL-CIO) training programs introduced the concepts of democratic trade unionism and eventually the CGT was granted admission to the democratic trade union international family known as the ICFTU, which was European social democratic in its origins - so some progress was made in that sense. I want to be careful and not overplay this. To many decent middle class Argentines, many Argentine labor chiefs are still little more than thugs and to call them "democrats" would be a stretch. Yet that judgment is too extreme on the other side and reflects a certain degree of class snobbery and prejudice. None of them are angels, but I can think of some Argentine trade unionists who are dedicated to the interests of their fellow rank-and-file workers albeit within the constraints of their own ideological framework and there are a few whom I regard as personal friends. Through their association with the AFL-CIO, we taught them the language of democracy and to some not insubstantial degree this rubbed off. Moreover, I think it undeniable that the Peronist union leadership served as a buffer against communist or Marxist inroads in the Argentine labor movement. Castro communism was largely unsuccessful in infiltrating the labor unions. The Marxist guerrilla insurgency (ERP) that came later, in the '70s, did not gain support from the labor unions. The other major guerrilla insurgency, the Montoneros, did have Peronist or nationalist origins and enjoyed some sympathy among workers on the margin, but the union leadership by and large resisted this (and some leaders paid with their lives as a consequence) and a few even colluded secretly with the security forces in the "dirty war" against the rebellion.

Q: And after six months, did you rotate to other parts of the Embassy?

FREEMAN: I did other things. I did the normal tour. I spent a year as a consular officer doing non-immigrant visas, which was a pain. Buenos Aires was (is) one of those places where large numbers of people line up each day at the Embassy to try to get a visa to come to the United States. A large part of my time was spent on visa fraud and problems like that, and you had to interview some incredible number of people, a hundred a day or more. It was a hectic, thankless job, and there was a lot of pressure on the visa officer not to err by issuing temporary visas to people who intended to stay in the U.S. Of course, over 90 percent wanted to stay, and the real question was how artful were they in lying about it, and how artful were you in catching them in an obvious lie so that you had no conscience attacks in denying them a visa. I was also in the economic section in Argentina and did commercial-economic reporting for six months.

Q: And after Argentina?

FREEMAN: After Argentina I was assigned to Valencia, Spain, where I was political officer and vice consul for two years in a small consulate. That was a rather quiet post, not terribly exciting. On weekends the U.S. 6th Fleet would come into port so that the sailors could have shore liberty and we would take advantage of these visits by inviting the local Spanish authorities from our consular district aboard the Admiral's barge and aircraft carrier flagship for dinner parties or lunch. I really didn't do any labor work except on the margins. What was interesting was that there was the beginning of an anti-Franco movement at that time which was disguised as a Valencian regionalist autonomous cultural movement. That was virtually the only permissible civic activity allowed at the time outside the official Falange. Poetry reading in the Valenciano language, actually a subdialect of Catalan, was the medium by which semi-oppositionist political activity could take place, thinly disguised as cultural events. We prided ourselves in that small consulate on getting out and meeting these people, cultivating them, and sending them to the United States on leader grants. We had contact with the student movement then. I also had one or two contacts with trade unionists, one of which once produced a small problem. Some old timer came in to see me one day claiming to be from the CNT, the old anarchist trade union movement that had been eliminated by the Franco regime, and we talked for about an hour, mostly about the Spanish Civil War. I didn't think much of the conversation, but later it turned out that this guy was either an agent of the Spanish intelligence or was picked up later and interrogated by Spanish intelligence, and he told them all about his great conversation with me, and I subsequently got a little blast from the Embassy. The Spanish had complained through their intelligence channels with the Embassy and this led to a query from the Embassy asking why I had met with this character.

Q: He was a walk-in into the Consulate?

FREEMAN: He was a walk-in. But we were rather active and aggressive in getting out and meeting people who made no bones about their being in opposition to the Franco regime. We maintained an open door policy in the Consulate. Basically, the struggle which was taking place at that time sub-rosa in the political opposition was between the Communists and the Socialists.

Q: This would have been in 1964?

FREEMAN: 1964 to 1966. Once I attended a trial of some Communists. It was really a fascinating experience. There were about 10 to 15 Communists, many of them factory workers, who were tried in the Valencia court for subversion, and I was assigned by the Embassy to report on their treatment. That was quite an event.

Q: Were any of the Communists involved in trade union activities?

FREEMAN: Yes, but we didn't know very much about it at the time. They were involved; they had infiltrated the Spanish Syndicalist trade union. Franco had his own Fascist-type or corporate state trade union movement. It was a State-controlled trade union movement and the Government party, the Falange, designated the labor leaders, but there was, in fact, a lot of rhetoric in the Falange ideology about defending the workers and the little guy. There was actually a segment in the Falange who were genuinely socially conscious and fighting for the workers within their system. But it turned out that at the factory level some of these guys were clandestine Communists who had infiltrated the union. The Communists were already beginning to organize in the factories. The Socialists were not strong in the factories at that time; they were in the universities among the students, but not in the factories or the unions.

Q: After Spain, where did you go?

FREEMAN: After Spain I came back to the United States, and I volunteered for labor training. The labor training program at that time was a whole year, half of which was spent - and what an awful waste of time - having meetings with the bureaucracy in the Labor Department and in the Social Security Administration. The training program consisted largely of walking down the hall from one office to another and getting a briefing on their mission: "This is room 101; this is the Employment Security Administration. We do this..." There were some good people who ran the program, but I did not find the program terribly exciting.

Q: Who coordinated the program?

FREEMAN:Well, Jim Taylor was overall director of the program, I believe, but the course coordinator, as I recall, was a gentleman of Austrian origin named Arnold Steinbach. Sam Justice was the deputy director of the program. Harold Davey was involved in the training program and Gerry Holmes was around too. I remember one of the highlights for me was Gerry's discussion on the structure of the international trade union movement. That was Gerry's "bag" at that time, and he was one of my mentors. That did interest me. The second semester was to be the best part of the program, up at the Harvard trade union school, but in the meantime the State Department needed a labor attachï¿½ in La Paz, Bolivia, and I was selected for that. So I curtailed my training and went off to La Paz in February 1967. Just recently I had occasion to be in a meeting at the Department of Labor where I renewed my acquaintance with former Assistant Secretary of Labor George L.P. Weaver. I remember being summoned into his office for a handshake before I went off to La Paz, and I'll never forget what he told me then. He said, "There's nothing to concentrate the mind so much as a man about to be hung!" That was his parting benediction to me.

It's conceivable this was a reference to the fact that a President of Bolivia named Villarroel had been hung from a lamppost in the main Government square in an uprising in 1946. More likely, however, Mr. Weaver was referring to an incident involving three or four U.S. labor experts which had taken place in Bolivia just a few years before our conversation, in 1963. At that time several different USG overseas agencies had their own labor experts. We had a USIA labor program. We had an AID labor program. The Peace Corps was in Bolivia and had somebody working on labor, and of course there was the Embassy Labor Attachï¿½. All those guys were together one day at a miners' congress in Bolivia, and shortly thereafter they were all taken hostage.

This was during the Kennedy Administration, and it was a serious event. Kennedy was actually contemplating sending U.S. airborne units in to extricate them. But they got out otherwise - with an assist from consular officer Charlie Thomas, who is now special envoy to Serbia. But that was a big event at the time, and George L.P. Weaver, who headed the International Labor Affairs Bureau in the Labor Department, undoubtedly followed this story as it unfolded. I presume what he wanted to tell me was that Bolivia was a wild country and I should keep my guard up. Bolivia really was a primitive place and a classic case of underdevelopment. And that was my first assignment as labor attache.

Q: Did the unions play a major role in the political process in Bolivia at that time?

FREEMAN: Well, they did in terms of sabotage, yes. They were in opposition to whatever government was in power in La Paz - unless it was a "socialist" government controlled by them and maintained in power by their own force of arms, that is, by the workers' own militias. This was a distant goal they were never quite able to pull off. But basically I had the sense that these guys did not believe in a national government. In some sense, they were just anarchists at heart. For them, whoever was in power was bad, whether they were the military "gorillas" or the "national bourgeoisie" (i.e. the MNR), because they thought that, under either, they - the workers - were equally likely to be "sold out" to capitalism and "Yanqui imperialism". Undoubtedly, there was an ethnic underpinning to this. The miners were mostly Indian or of mixed race, largely divorced from the urban white minority that controlled the country, and from whose ranks the government was formed. The miners started several revolts when I was there. This was during the time that Che Guevara had infiltrated clandestinely into the country. During one of the revolts the miners got on the radio and declared their independence from the rest of the country, calling themselves the "Independent Republic of the Mining Area." Of course, the miners were armed only with their ancient weapons and dynamite sticks. They had been allies up to a point of the MNR party, which took power in a revolution against the landholding and mine-owning "aristocracy" in 1952, and ever since then had stashed away their arms "for a rainy day". The campesinos, that is, the Indian peasants, also had their militias and remained armed. Bolivia was also a feudal country in another sense. Since the MNR revolution, the state had been much involved in the economy, with a nationalized mining company, a nationalized oil company, and so forth. These state enterprises were run like feudal entities. For example, COMIBOL, the state mining corporation, was its own feudal empire. YPFB, the state oil monopoly, was another self-contained entity which was a relatively privileged place to work that resisted efforts to make it more efficient and have its earnings diverted by the Government for the greater benefit of the country. It specially resisted Government efforts to grant foreign oil companies concessions in the country. Towards the end of my tour in Bolivia, the government of Army General Alfredo Ovando Candia (which had come to power by coup following the accidental death of President Barrientos in 1969) nationalized the Gulf Oil Company's interests and put them under YPFB control. This, I suppose was intended to make his seizure of power (from Barrientos' hapless civilian vice president who headed a tiny bourgeois party called the "Social Democrats") more palatable with the people and reflected the beginnings of a leftward nationalist drift in Ovando's military government that became clearer in 1970, after I had departed from the country, with the seizure of power by a more clearly radical leftist nationalist military regime headed by General Juan Jose Torres. Torres' coup was backed by the leftist trade union and university student movements, at least up to a point. Bolivia was a fabulous place for a political observer, because every political party under the sun was in this place. If there were 10 varieties of Trotskyism in the rest of the world, Bolivia had 20 varieties, particularly in the mines. There were some really fascinating characters. The trade union movement was a Marxist dominated movement which came in many different hues. They were uniformly hostile to the United States, so to try to build labor contacts meant working in a fairly hostile labor environment.

Q: Were you able to meet them?

FREEMAN: Oh yes, I met them although I can't say I ever had a successful dialogue with them. This was an interesting time. AIFLD by this time was a well-established entity, and AIFLD had a program in Bolivia. But AIFLD couldn't get to first base with these leftists and really didn't care to either. The AIFLD strategy at that point was to try to work with professed anti-Marxists, who were a distinct minority in the Bolivian labor movement. Well, it so happened that there was a Falange, a Falangista movement, which must have been fascist in its origins but, I suppose, by this time was evolving in Bolivia as a kind of social Christian thing. The majority of the country's union leaders were on the left, but this movement was somewhere to the right in the spectrum, or at least I assumed that it was.

Q: Was it aligned with any foreign philosophy?

FREEMAN: No, I don't think so. At least, I wasn't aware of any direct support from the Spanish Government or Falange, although it's conceivable.

Q: A nationalistic Falange?

FREEMAN: Yes, I suppose, although they called themselves "Socialist Falange" which sounds like something that comes from the original Spanish model. There must have been some connection in the early years to Spain, at least in inspiration. But I wasn't a great student of their history.

Bolivia, as you know, is an Andean country. The high Andes run generally north-south through Bolivia along the western edge of the country, somewhat similar to the Rockies in the U.S. Actually, the trajectory of the Andean system through Bolivian territory is more crescent-shaped, running more in a northwest-southeast direction. In Bolivia the Andes actually split into two great parallel mountain chains, making space for a high, more or less flat plateau median strip between the two chains about 80 miles wide and 500 miles long, which is at an altitude generally of about 12,500 feet above sea level. This mostly barren, windy plain is known as the Altiplano. The capital city, La Paz, lies in a deep gorge cut into the Altiplano, a thousand feet below. The western cordillera marks the border with Chile. The eastern cordillera is actually made up of several ranges and valleys. The snow peaks of the eastern chain hovering over the Altiplano range from 15,000 to 22,000 and up. Most of the population of Bolivia traditionally lived in the Andean highlands regions - on or near the Altiplano and in the valleys. The mines are located mostly in the eastern cordillera of the Andes. The Indians of the Andean Altiplano and cordilleras (Aymara and Quechua) are quite distinct from the Indians of the great expanse of savanna and rainforest lowlands of the Amazon river watershed which lie beyond and below the eastern slopes of the eastern cordillera. Southeast of La Paz and Cochabamba in this lowlands country just beyond the eastern slopes of the eastern cordillera and about halfway to the Brazilian border to the east, there is a large city (and province) called Santa Cruz, which was a stronghold of the Falange, at least relatively-speaking. Not to confuse my digression about the Indians in this geographic picture that I just tried to paint, the agricultural planter class - indeed the economy generally of the Santa Cruz region - has been dominated by criollo Spanish-speaking settlers since colonial days. (And I doubt there are any Falangistas among the Indians). But this is a land of much recent migration also where a frontier spirit prevails and free market ideas have a better chance of taking root. AIFLD strategy was to work against the leftist-controlled Bolivian Labor Central headquartered in La Paz known as the COB by cultivating and training whatever anti-leftists, dissidents (such as the Falangistas), or ideologically undecided people they could find among the workers anywhere in the country, and Santa Cruz was an area easier for them to work in. AIFLD had a sizeable training program which concentrated on special sectors such as the teachers, commercial workers, campesinos and the like, but it was an uphill struggle against the leftist juggernaut which controlled the COB.

This was my first labor assignment. I quickly got the sense of Bolivia's being an isolated, landlocked mountain hermit state. Some time in the early 20th century the Bolivian labor movement, led by the miners, had become impregnated with leftist, Marxist doctrines. The Bolivian worker was indoctrinated with the idea that Bolivia was an immensely rich country because of its mineral resources whose native Indian population had been robbed, enslaved and exploited since the beginning of time, first by the Spaniards and then by the United States with the aid of a traitorous white minority Bolivian ruling class of descendants of the original Spanish conquistadores who had "sold out" to the foreign interests for their own self-benefit. This lent itself to leftist and collectivist doctrines and the prevailing notion that Bolivia's fabulously rich (supposedly) mineral resources were better off left in the ground than to be exploited by voracious foreign, especially American capitalist interests. The immense majority of Bolivian labor leaders were all basically Marxist of one shade or another, although some less hostile than others. I use the term "Marxist" to best describe them collectively, but this covers a rich variety of leftist ideologies - of people claiming allegiances to the orthodox Soviet Communist Party, Maoists, Trotskyites, and who knows what else. Actually, as I think about it now, there was probably a lot of just plain nationalist sentiment reflected here as well. I saw it as my role when I arrived in Bolivia to try to establish some kind of civilized dialogue with a basically hostile, Marxist-dominated or leftist nationalist leadership. I was initially skeptical that the AIFLD approach, which I would characterize as one of trying to chip away at the Marxist monolith by identifying maverick would-be leaders here and there for training programs and scholarships, was going to get us anywhere. And I was especially not inclined to work with would-be labor leaders who called themselves "Falangistas". Besides, they had no great influence in the Bolivian labor movement that I could detect. I'm not even sure how strong the Falange actually was in Santa Cruz.

This was a very interesting assignment for several reasons. Bolivia was a country where the United States Government had extensive excess currency reserves. Bolivia repaid AID in local currency counterpart [funds equal to] whatever the dollar amount of the wheat was which was exported under the PL 480 program to Bolivia. The United States had enormous stocks of local currency, and in fact we owned something like 60 percent of all Bolivian currency. So AID had a lot of local currency. And the AID director at that point was Irv Tragen, a very smart and dynamic guy who had some prior experience in labor affairs before joining USAID. I believe he had once worked as an industrial relations expert in the Bolivian mines before the 1952 revolution. He was greatly interested in the social and labor programs, and he set up the Embassy Labor Attachï¿½ with a little "slush fund" for social action programs. When I arrived there, I was told that there was cash in my safe that I could use for "social projects". My predecessor had been Russ Olson, who had attended the same classes at American University as I several years before. The political counselor, Chuck Grover, told me that up to the last day Russ had been there, there were two lines of people waiting in front of the American Embassy daily. One was for the Consulate and the other for the Labor Attachï¿½. The Labor Attachï¿½ was a well-known and "popular" person in La Paz.

Several days after Olson left, the news got around that he wasn't there any longer and the line evaporated. The day after I arrived the line reemerged. So I got to meet a lot of people, of course, not the best people. I really didn't like this program because there was just one poor desperate fellow after another trying to persuade me to provide cash for one proposal or another supposedly of some social value when there was really little payoff for us from this nickel-and-dime stuff.

Q: How did you evaluate programs?

FREEMAN: Well, if the project seemed reasonable, I would ask to go out and take a look at it on the ground and, if I liked it, I would put some money in it.

Q: Did you have any local employees who could help you in the evaluation process?

FREEMAN: I didn't have a local employee, but USIA had a labor information officer, and of course USIA could come to me with their own project proposals, too. And the USIA officer had a local employee, a publications distributor, who was a former mine leader in his own right named Walter Camacho. Walter had the job of distributing USIA publications in the mining district since that was his home region. One day, on a visit to the mines, a miner contact alleged to me that Walter was actually a Communist and that he was bringing Communist Party literature into the mining districts on the USIA information truck, avoiding inspection by the police manning the roadblocks thanks to his US Embassy ID. (Pause)

Q: We were talking about Walter Camacho. Was it really true that he was distributing Communist literature?

FREEMAN: That we were never actually able to establish. I don't know whether it was true or not, or whether he was fired or not. The USIA labor information officer thought it was a calumny, but there may have been some action taken against Walter. By that time, my tour was up and I had left the country.

Q: Did he help you with the evaluation process?

FREEMAN: Perhaps on occasion he had a comment to offer, but I didn't look to him principally for that. Nevertheless, I had a great deal of respect for Walter. He was a taciturn but clever guy who was direct and to the point and capable of a rough-hewn political philosophy. He made an impression on me. All of these people were interesting, especially the miners. But let me just tell you about Walter. On my first trip to the mines, I was driven by road to Oruro, a city on the fringes of the Altiplano to the southeast of La Paz - one of the largest Bolivian cities in the mining district. I was to link up there with this USIS local employee named Camacho and he would then accompany me to the mines. I got into this town, which had a very bleak landscape. I was put up in a rundown old hotel which had long since seen its finer days. This was one of the two worst hotels I've ever been in. The other was on one of the more distant Filipino islands. It was a misty, foggy day. I was supposed to meet this guy at a certain street corner, and out of the fog at dusk comes this weary-looking apparition in an oversized Second World War U.S. Army winter trench coat hanging down to his knees. I rarely saw him take the coat off afterwards. He had a sad sack demeanor and was a sight to behold. But over time, we had many conversations and I began to understand and appreciate the miners' mentality from him.

Walter was by no means obsequious. Albeit with a requisite amount of tact, he would let you know what he didn't like about U.S. policy, and he certainly did not like the pro-U.S. government of Air Force General Rene Barrientos, who was elected President in 1966. Barrientos was both a military pilot with fly boy panache and a talented politician with charisma and ward boss skills. He had associated with the MNR party early in his career and was chief of the Air Force in the MNR government of Victor Paz Estenssoro. He had received his pilot's training from the U.S. Air Force and this helped give him the aura of being a modern man familiar with the outside world, but he also enjoyed his own political base in his home area of Cochabamba and had a following even among the Indian campesinos there. In 1964 Paz Estenssoro was reelected President with Barrientos as his vice presidential running mate on the MNR ticket. However, a few months later, Barrientos conspired in a coup against the Paz government with the support of the Army's Chief of Staff General Alfredo Ovando Candia. New elections were scheduled in 1966 and Barrientos was elected President. As President, Barrientos pursued pro-US and pro-market economic policies until he was killed in 1969 in a helicopter crash.The MNR, or Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, was the broad-based nationalistic populist movement containing a melange of disparate elements that had come to power in a social revolution against an older order in 1952, a major event in Latin American history. Actually, "order" is the wrong word. Bolivia had suffered from successive coups d'etat throughout its history. Opponents of the Movement alleged that in its origins in the 1940s MNR leaders such as Paz Estenssoro held pro-Nazi sympathies similar to the Argentine Peronists, but in 1952 the MNR's muscle came from (besides the dissident police) the movement's left-wing, composed of armed workers and campesinos. The core of the armed worker forces was the miners' militia headed by the maximum leader of the FSTMB mineworkers union, a legendary leftist nationalist figure named Juan Lechin Oquendo. Lechin served as Paz Estenssoro's vice president in one of the MNR governments, but policy differences and succession issues led to a falling out between President Paz and the party's left-wing, represented by Lechin and the mineworkers union. On taking power in 1952 the MNR purged the military officers who had defended the previous regime against the revolution, forced the Armed Forces to swear allegiance to the MNR, and kept the military weak. After Paz's falling out with Lechin and the MNR's left-wing, however, Paz Estenssoro had to rely increasingly on the military as the major source of his government's support and the Bolivian military restored itself as an institution. The professional military, of course, did not appreciate the fact that it didn't enjoy a monopoly of force in Bolivia and that there were armed civilian militias throughout the country. When there was rebellion in the mines, it was the Army that was historically called in to restore order, so there was mutual enmity particularly between the military and the mineworkers as there had been a number of armed clashes between them. There was mutual enmity between the workers and the military generally because they were natural rivals for political power in Bolivia, but hatred for the military was especially intense in the mining districts.

Once, Walter and I were in one of the mines in the South and we were having our meal in the guest house. Camacho turned to me and said, "See those guys at the other table? Those are all President Barrientos' body guards. Barrientos must be here" They were all young, crewcut security types. It was clear that Walter didn't have any liking for these people or for Barrientos, or for the government, and probably not much for us either. But he had been working for USIS already for a number of years and he was my guide in the Bolivian mine country. I had to treat him with a certain reserve, but I learned a lot from him.

Q: He was a Bolivian national?

FREEMAN:Oh, yes, a Bolivian national. I believe he had been a board member of the Bolivian Mine Workers Federation (FSTMB) at one time before having been hired by USIS. Now I was not the first Labor Attachï¿½ in Bolivia, as I said, and there were some guys who had really done a lot of work before me, including a fantastic character named Tom Martin. You ought to interview him, if you haven't. He was a USIA labor officer and Bolivia was his first assignment. All of us always love our first assignment, you know. We really go all out, and he went all out. He knew everybody there was to know in the Bolivian labor movement. This was during the Kennedy Administration, and incidentally, he was one of the guys who was taken hostage in 1963, and up until that time, he had made it a point to know everybody. He went a long way towards deepening U.S. Embassy relations with the miners. Maybe there had been predecessors like Mike Boggs' father, who had been labor attache in Bolivia earlier, but Tom Martin was undoubtedly a pioneer in reaching out to Bolivian miners to an extraordinary extent. I tried to do the same. I made an effort to meet the COB people even if they didn't like us much. That's the labor attache's job, to meet the people and understand what's going on in the workplaces and streets of the country, rather than being stuck in the Embassy writing reports or engaging only in government-to-government relations.

The other assignment I received when I was there as Labor Attachï¿½, which took me on visits to the mine districts fairly regularly, was to coordinate a USAID project called the "COMIBOL Social Projects Program." It was a $ 1 million program of building health centers, schools and workers' housing in the mining regions, and I was in charge of monitoring it. I didn't actually handle the money or supervise the construction work, but my job was to help promote the program and to monitor its effectiveness. So that brought me to the mines on a regular basis and occasionally into conflict with the COMIBOL management, because we had different philosophies about what was supposed to be done with the money.

Q: With whom?

FREEMAN: With COMIBOL, the state mining enterprise. These were local currency funds that we had and AID decided it was going to be used to invest in social capital in the mining areas to try to raise the workers' [living] standards, and of course there was a political objective behind this of constructively engaging and hopefully mollifying the mineworkers, who represented a potential threat to the stability of the country.

This was a politically volatile territory. The country's major tin mine complex was called Catavi-Siglo XX about 40-50 miles southeast of Oruro next to which there was a small civil town called Llallagua. The mine itself, called Siglo XX ("Siglo Veinte" or "20th Century"), was separated by a mile or so from Catavi, which was where the mine offices, the processing mill and mountains of mine tailings were located. This was where the hostages had been taken several years before, and I used to think when I traveled to this district that they should put a big red star up over the mine entrance. Given the prevailing political attitudes in this zone it would have been appropriate. It was like traveling to North Korea or something like that. For me, it was just a Commie land of 25 different varieties.

Q: These were primarily copper mines?

FREEMAN: No, tin mines. I met with the leaders and they talked with me, thanks to Walter Camacho's intervention, but they were very cautious and reserved, if not openly hostile. They didn't care much for strangers anyway, let alone Americans.

Q: You never had any problems?

FREEMAN: I never had any problems myself. I had a pistol stowed away on these trips in case of an emergency. Thank God I didn't have to use it. No, I never had any real problem I can remember. But I got into a heated debate with the mine management once, because they wanted to take the AID money and run, and they probably were right. The American idea was rather naive. The American AID officials believed in something called "self-help." You don't give money to somebody unless they are willing to help themselves and the U.S. investment was supposed to be matched by self-help labor on the recipients' part. That was what I was supposed to tell them.

And so we said, "We're going to take this money and invest in materials and contract out the heavy construction, but the mineworkers themselves have to contribute some of their own labor also if they want a new house or a new hospital." That was the American idea of self-help. And the reaction from the COMIBOL management would be, "Self-help, my ass! These people (the mineworkers) will not lift a finger to build or even repair their own housing. They believe that the state owes them the housing. They risk their lives in the state-owned mines each day and they feel it to be the state's obligation to provide them with shelter and food. Why should they spend their time off on improving their housing, when they think it's the state's obligation?" Probably the mine management was right, but I was American and put naive faith in AID's credo. Besides, that's what I was paid to do. At one mine the manager sought once to bar my entry to the property because of our sharp differences over this issue, which led to a shouting match at the entrance to the compound before he let us in.

Q: How would you evaluate the social programs on balance?

FREEMAN: Well, we completed the construction of these projects without any mineworkers' self-help, and the projects met the objective of creating a physical social asset, but whatever political impact they had I think was probably marginal.

Q: Did the programs affect attitudes?

FREEMAN: I strongly doubt it. Well, we did our thing, which was to build social projects in the mining districts, and the miners did their thing, which was to rebel whenever they could, and they still do. These mines have since become of even more marginal value than what they were during this period, but the miners are still kept at work just to keep them employed and hopefully out of trouble. We had a number of Peace Corps volunteers assigned to the mining areas during the time I was there working on the social programs. Once when the Ambassador received some early intelligence that a new rebellion was about to break out, he asked during a Country Team meeting what the Embassy staff thought about pulling the Peace Corps volunteers out. Of course, he had already decided to pull them out, but it was the Ambassador's practice to hold town meeting-like gatherings of the Embassy staff on Friday mornings which he presided over using the Socratic teaching method. He explained these meetings as performing an important function because he felt the altitude and lack of oxygen did strange things to everyone's thinking processes and he wanted to check his own decision-making with the collective wisdom of the Embassy staff. Anyway, he asked "What do you think about pulling out the Peace Corps volunteers?" Everyone else said, "Yes," and I was the only one who said "No! We're there to show the flag," I said naively. "We've got to stay there!" But the Ambassador was right. He pulled the PCVs out, and next day not only did the rebellion start but about two or three days later the Army sent a train full of troops hidden inside the boxcars into the railroad yards overlooking the mining camp like a Trojan Horse. A freight train slid into the camp the evening of the San Juan fiesta and parked in the railway yards just above the housing area. At midnight the Bolivian Army's U.S.-trained Challapata Rangers came out of the freight cars and, taking advantage of the miners sleeping off their holiday binge, seized control of the district, shooting up the place. A number of people were said to have been killed in that particular incident which came to be remembered in the mining districts as the night of the "San Juan Massacre". That was in June 1967, I believe.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time?

FREEMAN: That was Doug Henderson, another great Ambassador I was proud to serve under.

Q: Did he have intelligence that this was about to begin?

FREEMAN: Yes, I'm sure he did. He didn't tell us that, but I'm sure he did.

Q: He didn't share it with you?

FREEMAN: Well, he didn't say he had an intelligence report, but he said something like, "There are some stirrings in the mines. Should we pull the Peace Corps volunteers out?" and again I was the only one to say, "No." But I think he knew what was coming. He was a Bolivia expert and had been there many years. He was the Ambassador during the 1963 kidnaping incident I mentioned earlier. Incidentally, that hostage event was very interesting, if you're not familiar with it.

Q: Go right ahead and describe it.

FREEMAN: I think you should talk to Tom Martin about it. I learned all about it before I went to Bolivia. Tom Martin was USIA Labor Adviser in the Embassy. The Labor Attachï¿½, if I'm not mistaken, was Emanuel Boggs, Mike Boggs' father. He was not among those taken hostage. Martin was the USIA guy, but he probably was doubling as a kind of Assistant Labor Attachï¿½ for the Embassy, and there was also a guy whose name I don't remember right now, Bernie something or other from Brooklyn (Rifkin?), who was an official of the Teamsters' Union in New Jersey and who later became Jackie Kennedy's lawyer. He was the AID labor officer.

What happened was there had been a Bolivian Mineworkers' Congress in one of the mining towns - I believe it was Colquiri - and this U.S. Embassy delegation of four or five people attended, after which they were supposed to travel further into the mining district, passing through the city of Oruro and then proceeding to Catavi-Siglo Veinte. But when they got to Oruro, they learned that the Paz Estenssoro government had arrested two leftist mine labor figures named Federico Escobar and Irineo Pimentel. It was in reaction to these arrests that a rebellion erupted in the mining region, and in the midst of this particular event, this American group innocently showed up in Catavi-Siglo XX. They were invited to the mine manager's home, and while they were having a meal there, they were all taken hostage, including the mine manager, and put in the mine.

The mine manager was a Dutchman, who later worked in AID at the American Embassy, so I got to interview him, too. I also heard the story from Tom Martin; I heard it from Bernie Rifkin, or whatever his name was, because he was living in New Jersey, which was my home state, and we got together at a bar one night while I was home. And I also heard the Ambassador's version of the story when I got to Bolivia. Also the former mine manager and later, I believe I spoke briefly with Charlie Thomas also. So I had a pretty good picture. It was something like the famous Japanese movie Rashomon. Everyone had a different version of what had happened. Tom Martin's version - and I am a bit hazy on this now - was that the miners had justification for taking them hostage; it was the only practical way they could deal with the double dealing their union leaders Escobar and Pimentel had received from the hands of the government. According to Tom, the mineworker who had been guarding them inside the mine simply walked off his post at some point and the hostages got up and ran out into the open, right into the town square of Llallagua, where there were intermediaries present from La Paz who had been sent down to negotiate their release, along with the world press as well as U.S. consular officer Charlie Thomas waiting with his Embassy vehicles. The Americans burst out into the sunshine, and the crowd, according to Tom Martin, instinctively cheered the Americans. The Embassy vehicles pulled up, they all piled in and off they went to the applause of the mob. According to Tom, a nice, heart-warming affair. Maybe, I'm not doing him justice. You will have to interview him directly. Rifkin, as I recall, had a slightly different version. According to Bernie, he overpowered the guard and then they all escaped.

But I heard a very different story from Ambassador Henderson. The Ambassador had traveled to Oruro and set up his temporary headquarters there, keeping in touch with the Bolivian authorities and communicating with Washington. He had some of his Embassy staff with him, including his Air Force Attachï¿½, when the freed hostages showed up in Oruro.

Oh, I left out an important point here. Tom Martin told me that the government announced from La Paz that it was going to release the two mine leaders, and that was what changed the atmosphere down in the mine, permitting the release of the hostages.

But the Ambassador did not have a very sympathetic view of what was going on and he was ready to take drastic measures if necessary. Of course, he had the safety of the Americans at stake here. But then the hostages showed up safely in Oruro and met with the Ambassador. He informed them that the Bolivian Government had not released the union leaders and didn't plan to either. And Tom Martin became very upset, according to the Ambassador, and said that if the Bolivian Government was not going to keep its word to release the Bolivian mine union leaders, "I'm going to go back and turn myself over as a hostage again to my friends. These are my friends. They've been betrayed, and I'm not going to be part of the betrayal." Henderson said he turned to his Air Attachï¿½ and asked, "Colonel, do you have your '45?" and the officer said he did. And Henderson said he ordered him, "If this man leaves the room, shoot him!"

Q: Was Tom Martin asked to leave the country at that point?

FREEMAN: I don't know. He probably left some time shortly afterward. You will have to ask him. But anyway, it was an exciting time. So I monitored the COMIBOL social projects program. There was this one other important incident I have to tell you about. It was discovered that Ernesto "Che" Guevara was in Bolivia. He had entered the country with false documents around February 1967 or so and managed to keep his presence a secret for a number of months. I think it was 1967. And around June, if memory serves, a French leftist named Regis Debray, who had entered Bolivia with journalist credentials, was arrested and revealed that he had just come from the very southeastern part of the country where he had, supposedly as a journalist, interviewed Che Guevara, who was roaming the hills down there with an armed band stirring up a guerrilla "focus". In retrospect, relatively isolated and uninhabited southeastern Bolivia seems an odd place to start a revolution aimed at toppling all of South America, but it wasn't so funny at the time. A U.S. green beret specialist went down to the region to take a look and came back to the Embassy reporting that Che Guevara was winning over the peasants and the whole region was about to fall. It would be Vietnam all over again. The Castro revolution had been successful in Cuba and now Che Guevara himself was leading a band of some 50 Cuban regular army veterans in an attempt to do the same in Bolivia as a first step towards bringing revolution to the entire South American continent. This Army officer urged massive U.S. military intervention in Bolivia as the only reasonable course of action, which the Embassy and the State Department strongly and rightly opposed.

But there was ample reason for concern. Bolivia being a very unstable country, it wouldn't have taken much to destabilize the government. True to form, the Bolivians fell back on old political habits. The political temperature began to rise in La Paz with the news of a rebellion in the southeast. The Government alleged there was coup plotting underway in La Paz and some politicians indeed sought to take advantage of the Cuban mini-invasion by demanding a change in government. And the miners, potential allies of any coup against a non-leftist government, were of course stirring. It didn't take much to get them started. The Government was very much concerned. I'm no longer exactly certain of the timing of all these different events now, but it was in this kind of atmosphere - with Che Guevara and a band of Cuban Army volunteers running around the southeastern part of the country and coup plotting by Bolivian politicians in high gear in La Paz - that the army came into the Siglo XX mining camp on San Juan by night, shot the place up, and regained control of the mining area. A few months later, the Bolivian Army caught the Cubans in an ambush and captured Guevara, following which he was executed.

Q: In Bolivia?

FREEMAN:Yes, he was captured and killed after being wounded in a firefight in the southeastern part of the country. In the end, Che and the Cubans defeated themselves. They chose an isolated, inhospitable geographic region of Bolivia to start their guerrilla war. As revealed by Che in his diary, which later turned up, he looked into the faces of the campesinos who he thought would welcome him with open arms as a liberator and all he could see were stony eyeballs. Some rag-tag remnants of his band escaped and it was rumored that they had actually come through the Siglo XX mining area on their way out of the country. Whether true or not, I don't know, but it's plausible as they actually escaped through Chile, so they may have traversed the mining territory when they escaped from Bolivia, four or five or six or ten or however many they were that escaped. It is plausible that they were put up for a night by the Siglo XX miners on their way out of Bolivia, as there were a lot of Communist sympathizers in the mining region.So it was a very exciting assignment. But I don't feel we made very much progress in Bolivia in terms of winning the minds and hearts of the labor movement there, which was what we were trying to do, or at least that's what we thought.

Q: Was that still the Alliance for Progress period?

FREEMAN: Yes, it was the Alliance for Progress. To this day the same kind of people still dominate the Bolivian labor movement. Of course, tin mining has gone down hill since then and is no longer a viable economic pursuit. Even then it wasn't very much of one either. This was a greatly subsidized industry. The Government had to put more money into the industry than they actually got back from selling the tin.

Q: Was there an urban proletariat at all?

FREEMAN: Yes, there was. There were factory workers. They were somewhat less volatile and probably less ready to pick up the gun, but not much less. They had been armed during the 1952 revolution also, but it was much more difficult to operate in the cities. You could feel a steamy smoldering resentment among some of the factory workers, but relatively milder views were also present and it was possible to carry out a dialogue and meet with factory worker union leaders in the city. I vaguely recall having discussed a possible social project with the brewery union. But I cannot say we really made any substantial or sustainable inroads politically with the labor movement. I think, even to this day they are still dominated by a leftist political mentality, the only difference being that the labor movement isn't so strong or powerful any more because mining is no longer a major industry.

Q: What years were you there, Tony?

FREEMAN: I was there from February 1967 to June 1970.Q: Then after Bolivia, where did you go?

FREEMAN: After Bolivia I was the desk officer for Bolivia in the State Department for two years, and then I had a year as Congressional Fellow on the Hill interning for Senator Charles Percy (Republican, Illinois) and for Representative Peter Rodino (Democrat, New Jersey) for four months each. That was interesting also.

With Rodino I got a chance to go back to Newark, New Jersey, my hometown. There was a serious problem in Newark at that time. Parts of the city had been burned in the riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King. There was a black nationalist movement, whose name I don't recall now, but it was led by a well-known playwright named Leroy Jones, who had changed his name to "Baraka" ("Blessed One" in Arabic?). He was a black poet, an intellectual, who was receiving Federal grants for some of his programs and projects in Newark. He was the founder of this black nationalist movement, and he decided to build its world headquarters in the last remaining Italian-American section of Newark, a part of which incidentally was the neighborhood where I grew up.

The neighborhood was very upset about this and there was some violence on the project. First of all the unions, which were racially-biased white unions - mostly Italian and Irish - boycotted the project and had a picket line around this building that was going up. It was right smack in this residential neighborhood, which was only about two blocks from Rodino's own home. And this stirred up a lot of racial animosity anew. There were some killings and Rodino wanted this project out of his neighborhood. Rodino had the reputation of being a Northern big city progressive white liberal, but he was under pressure from his own paisans to help get this issue resolved. So he got the idea, which I helped stimulate, that he would send me back to Newark to negotiate between the parties and be "Rodino's Kissinger." You know, I was a Foreign Service Officer. Kissinger was big in those days. He wanted me to be his Kissinger.So my assignment in Newark was to explore prospects for a settlement of the dispute. I didn't exactly have a plan as to what kind of a settlement but I was to see what solutions I could come up with on a visit to the area. So I met with the two major protagonists. One was Leroy Jones, who had his office at that time in the black ghetto in Newark's Central Ward. I remember walking to his office along a long corridor and looking at photographs on the wall. There were photos of a smiling "Baraka" with leaders of the Angolan Liberation Army and other guerrilla movements in Africa shot on location. He was evidently in good standing with several African Communist or left-wing leaders and had many photos on display of himself with these leaders.

Then the other protagonist was a guy named Tony Imperiale. Tony was an unforgettable character. He had the garbage contract in Newark. He was pretty close to being a thug. I guess that's not a bad description. He was a City Councilman of Newark and later became a New Jersey state assemblyman, but he was still a thug. I met him in his tavern in a back room. I had two meetings, one with Tony Imperiale in his bar and the other with Leroy Jones in his office. The thought occurred to me that maybe the thing to do would be to see if we could persuade Leroy Jones to vacate the construction site in return for which Rodino would help find public funding support to relocate him elsewhere. He was taking Federal money anyway. Maybe we could get Rodino to obtain Congressional appropriations for Jones to move his headquarters some place else. So I tried that idea out on Imperiale first, and he said "I don't give a goddam if you give him money, but get him out of here." Then I went to see LeRoy Jones, and he wasn't ready then to retreat. So that didn't go very far, but for me it was a definitely interesting episode, because it was a unique opportunity to find out what was going on in my home town from which I had been divorced [by the fact that I had been] overseas for quite a while.

Q: What year was that?

FREEMAN: That was 1972. I had been overseas about eight years straight and the U.S. had changed a lot in that time.

Q: Was the headquarters built?

FREEMAN: No. Something happened and the project didn't prosper. It was not built. They never got much beyond digging the foundation of the building and then they pulled out.

Q: Was that through your negotiations?

FREEMAN: No, it was not due to my negotiations, although it's likely there was some deal in the end that brought this about. Again, for me it was just an interesting opportunity for a Foreign Service Officer to go back and see what the hell had been going on in the U.S. of A. while we were out there "defending democracy" overseas.

The other assignment I had with Rodino was to develop a proposed Congressional redistricting plan for the state in order to gerrymander Newark - to ensure his reelection. As good a civil rights voting record that he had, he was concerned he couldn't beat a rival black candidate from his own party and so he wanted to redraw the map in order to bring more Italian neighborhoods from the surrounding vicinities into his Congressional district. He was the senior Democrat in the New Jersey Congressional delegation, so he was in a position to pull this off. He was re-elected without difficulty after I left his office, but I don't know if in fact this was based on the redistricting alternatives which I had mapped out for him using the census data at my disposal.

In my other Congressional fellowship stint, with Senator Percy's office, I took the initiative to explore with Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff lawyers the possibility of drafting new legislation conditioning U.S. foreign aid on country human rights performance. Percy's foreign affairs advisor thought this was too controversial, but some of the staff lawyers saw possibilities. This didn't go anywhere at the time because I didn't have the necessary support nor a clear enough vision of how to draft it, but the Congressional law adopted later requiring a State Department report to Congress on Country Human Rights Practices was an idea which I - albeit inexpertly - was trying to grapple with during my internship in Senator Percy's office.

So that took me to mid-1973, and then in September I went out as Chief of the Political Section in the American Consulate General in Sao Paulo, Brazil. There was a labor officer assigned to me there named Jesse Clear, who was designated as assistant labor attache for the country and who coordinated with the labor attache for Brazil, then based in Rio de Janeiro (Jim Shea). Maybe at a cocktail party I would get to meet one or two of Jesse's contacts, but I didn't know many of the labor people there in Sao Paulo. I was there for three years, from 1973 to 1976, and then I decided to take a labor assignment which was opening up in Buenos Aires, which had been my first post.

So I went back to Buenos Aires in August 1976 and stayed there until mid-1980. I went there as a labor attachï¿½ but became acting political counselor for a while when the political counselor was sent on detail back to Washington. I think I was acting political counselor for the good part of a year. That was a very interesting assignment, because, as I told you earlier, I had been in on the ground floor in developing contacts with the Peronist labor leaders, and many of the guys I had met then were still around. It was like old home week. I gained easy access to lots of people on the trade union side. It was known among the politicians that the U.S. Embassy had an active Labor Attachï¿½, who knew Argentina better than most Americans. People often called me out of the blue asking for an appointment. I had some fascinating experiences there, including some risky ones.

The situation in Argentina in 1976 was that the military had overthrown the government of Isabel Peron by coup in March. Juan Peron himself had died the previous year. It is hard for me to reconstruct this all now from memory, but there were two armed leftist insurgencies against Mrs. Peron's government. There was a Trotskyite, leftist-guerrilla, pro-Castro kind of movement, known as the ERP, and there was a more nationalist band of leftist urban guerrillas of Peronist origin known as the Montoneros, who had turned against Mrs. Peron's government. Mrs. Peron's government had dealt with this challenge in a shadowy, Machiavellian way. A close aide of hers named Jorge Lopez Rega, from his post in the government, created a clandestine right-wing group of off-duty policemen known as the "Triple A" to assassinate the leaders of the leftist insurgency. In effect, there was a civil war going on between left-wing and right-wing Peronists. The government was inept and corrupt and became successively weakened. In March 1976 the Armed Forces overthrew the government of Mrs. Peron and created a military junta in order to fully take charge of the war against the leftist insurgency and also to restore the economy which had been undermined by Peronist economic policies.

There was a proliferation of Argentine military intelligence services and they all practiced deception. I don't know how many different intelligence services they had. Maybe thirteen or something like that. Every armed force had its own intelligence service: The Navy, the Army, the Air Force, the Federal Police, the Gendarmeria. Even the Coast Guard. They were all operating there.

The right-wing of the Peronist trade union movement included the guys that I knew best and had cultivated early on. On my first tour we had worked with a different element, the Frondizi-coopted types. But over time we also came in contact with the right-wingers, too. By this time, many of the right-wing labor leaders had been coopted by, or eagerly joined, the intelligence services to fight the left-wing Peronists.

So there was a kind of Peronist civil war going on. And some of these Peronists were actually government agents, who were contract thugs for the government sub-rosa. Many of the killings were between Peronists of the left and Peronists of the right. Of the latter, some were on the payroll of one or another intelligence service. Quite a few top leaders of the Argentine trade union movement were killed this way during this civil war. And some of these killings were contract killings ordered or approved by the government intelligence services. It was not just a civil war. The military government helped to stimulate and paid for this, and many of the bodyguards of the government leaders were from the Peronist right-wing.

Peronists of both the left and right were anxious to maintain contact with the American Embassy and tended to gravitate towards me, because I was the labor attache and easily accessible. At the same time, we had officers in the Political Section assigned to human rights; and the more middle class left-of-center victims of the repression tended to gravitate towards them. By now, the human rights policy of the Carter Administration was in full swing and there were strong denunciations out of Washington concerning the violations of human rights in Argentina. The first signs of a human rights policy actually had surfaced a bit earlier in the Nixon Administration when I was in Sao Paulo, and I had gained some experience as political officer cultivating middle class liberal opponents of the military regime in Brazil, expressing U.S. concern about the heavy-handed military repression there.

But the Carter Administration's strong emphasis on human rights policy was not the only U.S. interest in Argentina. We didn't want to see the leftist guerrillas tortured to death and then "disappeared" in secret operations, let alone innocent civilians labeled as terrorists, arbitrarily detained and then disposed of in the same way, but I believe we recognized it was in the U.S. interest to see the guerrilla threat eliminated. We wanted the guerrillas dealt with by rule of law and some semblance of due process. When I say "we" I mean the US government. It's conceivable there may have been some people in the Administration in Washington who harbored a more benign view of Argentina's rebellious youth, but professionals in the State Department (and certainly the Pentagon) saw the guerrillas as a threat to US interests in Latin America. The political model they appeared to vaguely espouse was some kind of collectivist or totalitarian society, whether of the radical left or right or some hybrid thereof, and they used terrorist methods. They were the enemies not only of the current military dictators of Argentina, but also of the liberal democratic tradition in Argentine political history, represented by the civilian governments Argentina had known in the past. They were clearly anti-American. If they ever succeeded in attaining power, there was no doubt they would take Argentina on an anti-American, "anti-imperialist" path, whether directly into the Cuban-Soviet orbit outright or into the "non-aligned" camp. And so it was in our interest to see them defeated, but we preferred this done by civilized rules and not the way the Argentine military and police were doing it. As far as I can remember, however, U.S. concern over the latent threat represented by the insurgency was not articulated publicly. This may have been "signaled" or intimated in informal (and possibly even unauthorized) conversations between Embassy staff and Argentine government and military officials, but I don't think publicly. I would need to research this to be sure my reflections on this point are accurate but, officially, I think, the U.S. took a hands-off posture as to this internal rebellion in Argentina and the government's decision to defeat it militarily, except to express concern over the human rights aspects.

The Argentine counterinsurgency was carried out in good Machiavellian fashion. I had the notion of a great deal of deception going on and imagined there were operations where Army units pretended to be from the Navy, or vice versa, just to hide their unit's identity and defend themselves from any future acts of retribution (or justice). The intelligence services would hire thugs, who did a lot of the underground killing that went on. "The Dirty War" as they called it. The French had started this kind of thing in Algeria, I think, and I suspect the Argentines had learned from the French how to do it. This was their operating style, and there were trade union elements right in the middle, either on one side or the other. Some of the labor leaders were suspected of harboring sympathy toward the guerrillas and some were with the government, or at least they were against the guerrillas. AnI had opportunity to meet some of the thug types. As head of the Political Section, I oversaw the human rights work for a time and had some personal experiences trying to protect people's lives. On one occasion during a Congressional visit, Congressman Ben Gilman (R.-NY) asked to see newspaperman Jacobo Timerman, who had been seized at his home a few months back by police and was under detention. The Embassy arranged this and I accompanied Gilman to this meeting. We met with the Minister of Interior, General Harguindeguy, and then he had Timerman brought into the room. When I asked Timerman in the Minister's presence how he was, he answered he was all right "now". Timerman's meaning was clear. He had not been tortured recently. I have recently seen a copy of the cable I did reporting this meeting, which has since been released under FOIA. Frankly, I had forgotten some of the details including the fact that it was Gilman who had generated this meeting. My recollection was that the meeting was connected with a visit that Assistant Secretary Derian was planning to make to Argentina. She too wanted to interview Timerman and hoped to effect his release. Harguindeguy was concerned that Timerman's detention could lead to sanctions by the U.S. against Argentina and he apparently agreed to produce Timerman for Gilman, to demonstrate that Timerman was an officially registered prisoner, in good health (more or less), and he would be dealt with in an accountable way. Harguindeguy's concerns were heightened by a rumor that Timerman and Pat Derian were actually family-related. For me, that was just a base, anti-Semitic, barracks-type joke, but my recollection is that Harguindeguy wanted to appear to be forthcoming to the Americans on the eve of Derian's visit.

Q: He was this newspaper man?

FREEMAN: Yes, he was a newspaper man. Jacobo Timerman, a well-known journalist and editor of Jewish origin whose disappearance became a cause celebre in human rights circles in the U.S. and in the American Jewish community. On instruction from the Ambassador, I also accompanied a local Argentine representative of the American Jewish Committee named Jacob Kovadloff to the airport one evening to make sure he got out of the country without incident. He had been receiving threats. The papers and manuscripts he had with him were inspected by the police before he boarded the plane, but they let him go. So human rights was very much a concern of the United States as reflected in our official pronouncements and demarches to the Argentine Government. However, behind the scenes there was a problem festering between Jimmy Carter's Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Pat Derian, and Ambassador Castro. She felt he wasn't pressing the Argentines hard enough.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

FREEMAN: Raul Castro, who was a very interesting character. He was first appointed ambassador during Lyndon Johnson's administration, as I recall, but his ambassadorial appointments spanned several administrations. Buenos Aires was his third post. He had been my ambassador in Bolivia after Henderson, and when he arrived in Buenos Aires he was happy to have on board a familiar face who had served him in a previous post. I had a good relationship with him. He was a man's man, a guy with a tough hombre exterior, and I much liked the guy even though I didn't always agree with his (conservative) politics. Born in Mexico, he had been a boxer at one time, had worked his way up the hard scrabble way, emigrated to the U.S. and had become a citizen. He became a lawyer and a judge and was active in Democratic party politics in Arizona, eventually serving as Governor of the state before his first ambassadorial appointment. On one occasion in Bolivia he had been asked eagerly by a group of Bolivians whether he too was a "mestizo". "Hell, no", he said, he was "pure indio". (This went down very well in Bolivia, but later not so well with the "aristocratic" Argentines). On another occasion after the Gulf Oil Co.'s concessions were dramatically nationalized by the Bolivian military, he was on the phone in my presence answering somebody's questions and he said, "and we've just landed the Marines in Valparaiso and they'll be up here by tomorrow." It wasn't true, of course. Perhaps it was for the benefit and consternation of any Bolivian wiretappers listening in, or maybe he was just venting his macho side. You can't but like a guy like this. After the Foreign Service he returned to Arizona and was elected Governor again, but was implicated in some kind of political coverup of a criminal investigation while in office and I think he went to jail after that for a time. Anyway, he was a very picturesque and likeable character with lots of moxie. He liked me and we got along great, but he wasn't terribly sympathetic to traditional worker concerns. I had some arguments with him over labor issues, but he certainly supported my efforts to cultivate and report on the Bolivian and Argentine trade union movements.

And, as I said, I also oversaw the human rights reporting for a while and there were some differences which emerged between him and Pat Derian, because she didn't think he was doing enough in Argentina to rein in the military government's excesses. The Embassy's reporting and some State Department statements dealing with the human rights problems in Argentina during this period have recently been made public as a result of a FOIA action. It reveals that the volume of Embassy reporting on the detentions and other human rights violations was quite staggering and that all the key elements of the Embassy were engaged in this effort, including the Ambassador who, as per instructions from Washington, intervened personally on several occasions to make demarches to Argentine military authorities on behalf of individuals who had been arrested or "disappeared". But Patricia felt the Ambassador wasn't doing enough. I think there was a question as to whether there was a pro forma or routine quality to the Embassy's demarches. The regime responded now and then by "throwing us a bone", that is, producing (and saving) this or that prisoner when it recognized the pressure from the US was particularly intense. Also, there is some evidence in the record that the regime began reducing the number of "disappearances" after a certain point and ballyhooed this to the Embassy as an "improvement" in response to US wishes. But I'm not sure this wasn't just a reflection of the fact that the regime had largely achieved its objective and the "dirty war" was winding down anyway. If the US didn't do more, I'm not sure the blame should be put on the Embassy. If the US really wanted to put the screws to Argentina, I think it could have done much more in the way of economic sanctions, but that would have been Washington's call, not the Embassy's. Nevertheless, I think there was a certain degree of rankling on the part of the Ambassador as a result of the pressure he was under from Washington and this showed in his body language. There were also internal tensions within the Embassy on these issues. One officer in particular who was assigned the human rights portfolio came under fire in the Embassy because he appeared to be following instructions from the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs more than those of his own Ambassador. This officer was fearless in terms of going out, at some personal risk, and bringing back information on human rights abuses, but I think he probably also made some mistakes along the way. He was regarded as "grandstanding" and not being a "team player". The extreme reaction within the Embassy bordered on the ridiculous and he was virtually treated as a subversive. This led to nasty charges and countercharges, and his career suffered for a while after that. This later became a noteworthy subject of controversy within the Foreign Service grievance or other administrative channels, following which the officer eventually was fully "rehabilitated" and even honored for following his conscience. He has since even been elected President of AFSA. At the time this issue was being played out at post, I had mixed feelings about all this. I was no longer acting head of the political section by this time and wasn't privy to all the details (and he did not share them with me), but this officer was a colleague and friend and I empathized with his unhappiness that the Embassy's efforts weren't turning the Argentines around on their heels. If I had to think of one phrase to sum up the Argentine military's behavior in this period it would be "the banality of evil." They acted in an absolutely bestial manner. It would not have been in the U.S. interest if the leftist insurgents had succeeded, but once the military decided to intervene decisively, the insurgents were no match for the state. Of course, I have the benefit of hindsight in saying this now, but I think the military could have easily beat "the terrorists" without having had to adopt methods of state terrorism themselves. And I wonder whether the U.S. exercised enough pressure on them. That we didn't, I think the responsibility lies as much with Washington as with the Embassy. But whether the Ambassador could have done more or not, I still have warm regards for him personally.[February 5, 2004 note: Having almost by accident stumbled upon a website the other evening and located a cable of mine from this period on the Timerman meeting which has since been declassified under FOIA, it is an object lesson that my recollections of some events during my Foreign Service career may be substantially off in terms of accuracy. With this slew of cables numbering in the thousands now available on the US Embassy's human rights interventions during the 1976-1980 period, it's an opportunity for me to go back and review the record, which I hope to be able to do some time. Until I do, however, prudence dictates that I tone down the recollections and judgments I've offered up here and warn that they should be treated as provisional and not definitive. On the general point of recollections and accuracy, see more below in my postscript].

Probably the most important part of my job in Buenos Aires was to maintain contact with the Argentine political class who would be called on to run the Government when the country was eventually restored to normalcy. The Political Counselor before me in Buenos Aires, actually my boss when I arrived there on my second tour in the country, was Wayne Smith. Now Wayne was a fantastic political officer. He knew lots and lots of people, and we worked together very well. When Wayne's assignment was curtailed - I've forgotten why he left early - he turned over all his contacts to me. The Ambassador at that time, a Republican, was Bob Hill. He was from the Grace Lines Company. He didn't like me very much, whether because I was the Labor Attache (and as a businessman he had apparently had some prior unhappy history with the AFL-CIO), or perhaps because I had (both too loudly and as it turned out quite wrongly) predicted that the Republicans were going to lose the next elections in the U.S. [laughter], I don't know. He wanted to appoint somebody else from Washington as acting Political Counselor until a new Political Counselor was assigned by Washington, but Wayne insisted that I knew Argentina better and should serve in the interim.

Wayne turned over his contacts list to me. Among his contacts was a character named Americo Grossman, an Argentine Jewish businessman from Cordoba in the fur export business, who was a Peronist or called himself a Peronist, but who was also a friend (or agent) of Admiral Massera, the chief of the Navy and member of the ruling junta at that time. And Grossman had a Friday night soirï¿½e, a sort of political salon every Friday night, at his apartment during which any and every politician in the country would drop in, as well as flag officers from the Navy and Air Force. Few if any from the Army, however.

Americo also invited Wayne to these parties and Wayne had been a perennial Friday evening guest. When Wayne left town, he turned this over to me. So I became the American Embassy representative to this fabulous political salon and it was a unique opportunity to socialize and discuss politics with virtually all the leading political figures in the country, including Massera, the Chief of the Air Force, General Lami Dozo, who had also been a junta member at one time, various intelligence types, and the top leaders of the civilian political parties, at least two of whom were later elected Presidents of Argentina, Raul Alfonsin and Fernando de la Rua. This was a standing social gathering of leading figures of the incumbent military regime together with representatives of the fragile past and future civilian governments of Argentina, and as a representative of the American Embassy I was invited to mix in and develop a relationship with these people. This was an extraordinary experience which cemented my status in the Embassy as a knowledgeable political officer about Argentina and in the Argentine political and labor communities as a prominent official of the American Embassy.

At the same time I worked on labor and human rights issues in the Embassy and saw our political contact work as helping to encourage eventually the restoration of civilian democracy to Argentina. Certainly Raul Alfonsin, who was elected President after that, looked upon it that way. I developed a relationship with him. He went on an exchange grant to the United States in November 1980 and we spent the evening of the U.S. elections together in Washington analyzing the returns which saw Ronald Reagan elected President of the U.S. He paid me a call at the American Embassy in Rome when he was on a visit to Rome afterwards. So, the political aspects of my assignment in Buenos Aires were an important experience.

But let me also tell you about some labor contacts I had which provide a fascinating insight into the political underworld in Argentina. The top Peronist labor leader on the right-wing side - they called him... (End of tape)

FREEMAN: Where were we?

Q: You were talking about the "chief of chiefs."

FREEMAN: Before I get to that, let me add a footnote about the Argentine Navy. As I said, I had gotten to know the junta leader Admiral Massera. My wife and I were invited on board his yacht several times. I took Kissinger to meet with Massera once. Massera and the Navy were deeply involved in "the Dirty War". The Navy Cadets' School was reportedly used as a torture chamber. Where I didn't have any good contacts was on the Army side. The Army was mostly Catholic, nationalist, and right-wing reactionary. The Navy was considered to be much more internationalist because of its professional relationships with the British and American navies. The Army was more insular and nationalist. The Army was doing a lot of bad things, too, of course. They were both extremely bad. I recognized that I didn't have any good Army contacts. One day, a leader of the metallurgical union from Cordoba sidled up to me and whispered that the Army was "out to get" me. A particular colonel, whose name I don't remember now, had it in for me, he said. I jotted the name down; I didn't know who he was. And incidentally at this same time, AIFLD was in Argentina, and there had been several break-ins at the AIFLD office. The door to the office had been forced open, the safe opened and Communist slogans had been painted on the wall - a sign this was probably done by government intelligence units.

Q: Who was the AIFLD representative?

FREEMAN: It was Bob Cazares. We got along well and we did a lot of good things together. At least, I thought we did. I thought he had "the best" AIFLD program in Latin America. Why? Because he wasn't engaged in a labor indoctrination program for the Argentine trade unionists at all. Instead, all he did - and I joined in with him - was to develop contacts and cement relations. We just went from one asado to another together. We would be invited to lunch frequently in one union hall or another or out in the nearby campo where many unions had their recreation centers and hotels. Virtually two or three days out of five I would have an asado at some union headquarters, all during the time this shadowy civil war was going on in the country. They loved to have us; this was the way they treated their friends. Over tremendous steak lunches we would discuss labor and politics and that way we got to know virtually the entire Argentine trade union leadership.

In any case, I was told that this colonel was out to get me, even though I didn't know exactly why. It was only later that I put two and two together and realized that this was the same colonel who had been sending people in to burgle Bob Cazares' office.

Sometime thereafter I was approached by a guy. These people would come out of nowhere and want to meet you, and I had an open door policy, which was probably too open. One of them was a meat exporter introduced to me by the head of the meatpackers union, and so that's how I got to meet this guy. He claimed to be a personal friend of the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Viola. I said to him one day, "Viola is one of the people whom I don't know. I'd like to meet him sometime." And he said, "Sure, I can set it up." So one or two days later, I got a phone call that I was supposed to be ready at a certain street corner in Buenos Aires at 7 am in the morning and they would come by and pick me up. The designated place was a few blocks from the Army Headquarters Building in the center of town. It wasn't such a brilliant thing to do, but in keeping with the gung-ho spirit, there I was, standing on the street corner when a car pulled up and a door opened with people in civilian clothes insides, and one of them asked, "Freeman?" "Yes," I said, whereupon I was invited to "hop in."

This young guy said to me, "I am a nephew of Vandor's and I will escort you." Now Augusto Vandor had been the head of the autoworkers union, one of the most important of the Argentine trade union leaders, whom I had personally never got to meet. He was one of those guys we were trying to cultivate back in Henry Hammond's time. He stood us up once. Afterwards, Henry got to know him very well, but by that time I had rotated to another part of the Embassy and was no longer involved in labor issues. So I had not met Vandor. In the interim between my two assignments in Argentina, Vandor had been gunned down in his own office. After his murder his mystique increased even further. He was a great hero among certain trade union people, and now here's this young guy pulling up to me in a car on the street where I'm standing, called Moreno, and saying, "I'm Vandor's nephew. Get in. We are going to meet the General." So in I go, but the car then made a "U" turn and I quickly realized we were going in the opposite direction from the Army Headquarters building. We ended up at Federal Police Headquarters, not the Army Headquarters. The Federal Police were of course at this point run by the Army, as the Army was the principal force in the government.

So we went to the top floor and I was introduced to a Colonel so and so, who turned out to be the same colonel who, I had been warned earlier, was "out to get me". [Laughter] In all, we spent about two and a half hours in his office over coffee. It started out as a polite conversation in which he asked me what my job was, what the Embassy was doing, and what our human rights policy was all about, and at some point in the conversation, he said, "I want to show you something." I wasn't sure what would happen next and frankly the thought occurred to me that I could possibly end up "being disappeared" myself. It wasn't terribly smart of me to have set up this meeting this way. I don't think I told anybody at the Embassy that I was doing this, not even my wife either, at least not in any great detail. He said, "I want to show you something," and he took me down to the second or third floor. Now sometime before there had been an incident in this building in which guerrillas had gotten into Federal Police Headquarters and blew up the cafeteria. A large number of policemen died in that incident. In retaliation, the police reportedly rounded up around 50 or 100 prisoners they had in their custody, took them out to the countryside in handcuffs and lobbed hand grenades at them. They blew them up. That was their retaliation. Anyway, the Colonel took me downstairs to show me the cafeteria. They had put up a plaque where the police employees had died. He was obviously trying to persuade me - he wasn't out to kill me - he was making the point that we naive Americans were wrong; we didn't understand that there was a war going on, and in war you kill people. That was the point of the conversation, I believe. The Argentine Army was in a Christian crusade fighting World War III against world atheism and communism and they were gravely disappointed that they didn't have the full support of the United States. So I never got to meet Army Chief of Staff General Viola. Instead, I got to meet this guy for a fairly scary moment.

Q: Do you remember his name?

FREEMAN: I don't remember his name. But he was in charge of intelligence for the Federal Police, or counter-intelligence or whatever they called it. So that was one very interesting event.

Then some time thereafter, I got a phone call that Lorenzo Miguel, the national head of the metalworkers union, known as the capo di tutti (in Italian, "the boss of all the bosses" - clearly an allusion to his reputation of being a Mafia-like boss) who was the top right-wing Peronist, [was inviting me to dinner at his apartment]. This was quite interesting. Remember I told you of my suspicion that the right-wing labor guys were working for the military to kill the left-wing Peronists. This guy was very much on the right. He was the chief of the right-wing. He was the head of the Metalworkers Union, who had spent the past year or so in an Army jail. He probably had lived the life of Reilly while there, but he lived in jail. Maybe it was for his own protection, but he was in jail, presumably because he was a thug, where nevertheless he was treated royally.

He had been out of jail only a few days when he invited AIFLD's Bob Cazares and me over for dinner. I had not known him before. We knocked and guess who opened the door? The young kid who had told me that he was Vandor's nephew. "Hi, remember me?", he said meekly. "I'm Vandor's nephew!" Of course, I remembered him as being a police agent, because he was the one who took me to see the colonel at the police headquarters. I had subsequently checked him out and he had turned out to be a corporal in the Federal Police. He may also have been Vandor's nephew for all I know. So, here he was as some sort of valet in Lorenzo Miguel's home opening the door. I elbowed Bob Cazares in the ribs and whispered, "Be careful! I know this guy." Lorenzo Miguel came out and greeted us and introduced us to some others. We sat down and Vandor's nephew asked if he could get us drinks. And I said, "I'll have a scotch."

So the kid went out to get drinks and while he was out in the pantry, the Peronist labor leaders in the room whispered in unison, "Be careful! He's a police agent."

So, here was this scene in which Lorenzo Miguel was just released from jail and he wanted to meet with us while under the protection or surveillance of this guy working in his home. Technically, Miguel may have been under some kind of house arrest or parole status and that may explain this guy being in his house. But a police guard who doubles as manservant and claims to be a "compan[y]ero" of the guy he's guarding and keeping tabs on? In any case, Miguel knew this guy was a police agent and warned us to be careful of what we said, "Don't talk in front of this guy, because he's a police agent," which of course I already knew. That gives you the flavor of what political life was like in Argentina when I was there. That's why I told you this story. This gives you the ambience of the place.Q: What ever became of Miguel?

FREEMAN: He chatted with us, but nothing spectacular ever came from this that I can recall. He wasn't a great friend of ours, but it was obviously opportune for him to get closer to the Americans and to the AFL-CIO. He was a thug. Not much doubt about it.

In telling you this, some further flashbacks have come to mind about other experiences at previous posts which may be worth retelling also. Sao Paulo was my first experience in which I got involved in human rights and democracy promotion. This was a principal preoccupation of the Consulate General. A gigantic metropolis, Sao Paulo was a major center of resistance to military rule in Brazil. We found broad sympathy in the urban middle class and among the commercial interests for reining in the military's excesses and restoring democracy. This was during the Nixon and Ford Administrations and my recollection is that we had ample support from Washington to encourage respect for human rights and the restoration of democracy. This was before the advent of Jimmy Carter and his human rights policy. I looked up and cultivated a number of lawyers who defended the political opponents of the military regime in the courts. These lawyers were obviously political themselves - broadly supportive of the middle-class, mildly left of center MDB movement. At first, the lawyers were cool to these approaches, suspicious of some kind of entrapment, but they eventually warmed up. Brazil was facing an armed leftist insurgency of its own at this time and in defending itself against the insurgency a substantial number of human rights violations were committed. Perhaps not on the same scale or ferocity as Argentina a little later, but nevertheless quite problematic for the U.S. There was also censorship of the press, which was a bit humorous because the major liberal daily newspaper, O Estado do Sao Paulo, had the defiant practice of leaving blank the entire spaces where articles had been censored by the authorities. This produced quite a large amount of cut-out white spaces, which made for an odd-looking newspaper, but judging from the particular page of the censored articles and the nearby articles which had not been censored it was usually easy to figure out which stories had been censored. That was the editors' intention. Part of my job in the Consulate was to report on the abuses, the torture, and the killing that was going on there by the military. Also, the Consul General, Fred Chapin, who was a great boss and mentor and personal friend, made it a point of visiting periodically with Paulo Arns (spelling?), the Cardinal for Sao Paulo, the largest Catholic diocese in the world. I would accompany Fred on these visits. The Cardinal was very strongly opposed to this torture policy and really to the military regime itself. He was very much representative of the Vatican II Council Catholic Church. He did much to support the poor and underdogs of the Sao Paulo slums and I think he also supported the striking auto workers under "Lula" in the "ABC" industrial suburbs of Sao Paulo, which later evolved into a social movement, and after that into a Brazilian Labor Party, known as the Workers' Party (PT). Fred, through his visits, wanted to show symbolic U.S. support for what the Cardinal stood for. As the political officer in the Consulate, I cultivated the local politicians, particularly the members of the national Chamber of Deputies from Sao Paulo and of course the local state authorities. Also a former President of Brazil named Janio Quadros, who lived in the area. I was especially active in cultivating - and thereby providing the symbolic moral support of the U.S. - to the members of the middle-class MDB party, a sort of social democratic party, which was then on the rise in Brazil. This was our small contribution to the eventual restoration of political democracy in Brazil.

There's also an incident which took place while I was Labor Attachï¿½ in La Paz, which I basically kept to myself when I was there, but which gives me some personal satisfaction in recalling now. At some point, Governor Nelson Rockefeller made a whirlwind hemispheric tour of the major Latin American capitals with USG logistical support. Rockefeller had developed a thesis that we had to work with the military governments in Latin America. According to him, it was the best way to defeat the Communists and build the way towards restoration of middle-class democracy in Latin America. The first step was for the USG to develop relations with the military regimes and then work with them to promote middle class democracy in the Hemisphere. He was accompanied on his trip by none other than Andy McClellan, the Inter-American Representative of the AFL-CIO.

Q: Did Rockefeller have an official position in the U.S. Government at that time?

FREEMAN: He probably had been named by the President to chair some commission to study and recommend policy changes towards Latin America. He came in a semi-official or official capacity, but he was not in the government per se at that time.

Almost everywhere in Latin America Rockefeller landed, riots were mounted against him, Bolivia included. The Embassy decided it was not safe enough for Rockefeller to come down to the city from the El Alto airport, because there were road blockades being thrown up and riots planned in the city. The Ambassador, the DCM and the Political Counselor would go up and meet him at the airport instead. I insisted that I had to go and meet with Andy McClellan. McClellan was a very prickly character. If I didn't meet and greet him, I knew I would hear about it. And sure enough I did afterwards. The Ambassador would have let me go if I could have gotten through to him, but the Political Counselor, Chuck Grover, just didn't understand and said, no, I couldn't go.

So instead I was assigned to observe the riots in La Paz, and in fact, I walked down the main boulevard of La Paz, which was called the "Prado," towards the University to take a look at what was going on. The university, or "the U" as it was known, was a hot bed of radicalism, Communism, and Marxism of different varieties. The professors were mostly Marxists. And, as I said, every major element of society was a feudal element. The university was protected by the typical Latin American fuero or tradition of university autonomy and practically regarded as the "Independent Republic of the University." The government was expected to respect university autonomy and the police were expected to keep their distance except I suppose in the most extreme circumstances.

Well, I went down to the rotunda nearest to the university to watch the students run amok. I was standing in the plaza and I looked down below towards the university and there was one of my Embassy colleagues, who was actually "assigned" to our section but wasn't, if you know what I mean. He was a young fellow, a first tour officer, and he was standing out there all by himself on the street less than a hundred yards from the university, an obvious "gringo", taking photographs of the students running amok. I was standing there watching him, and all of a sudden a small commando group of students came out of the university running up the street, and grabbed this guy. They took his camera away from him, and I could see scuffling, and then they grabbed him and started dragging him back to "the U" as hostage.

He had spotted me a few minutes earlier, and he knew I was standing up there on the plaza onl25 or 30 yards away. He looked up at me as though to say, "Do something!" And, instinctively, I jumped down from the plaza and went running down the street towards them. I spoke pretty good Spanish, albeit with an accent, in those days, I had dark hair and liked to think I could be mistaken for some sort of Latin, Italian or whatever - but not obviously an American.

I went charging down there, and began shoving these guys and cursing at them. "What the hell do you think you're doing, you freaking assholes." You know, something like that in Spanish. And it rattled them enough that they broke and ran. They took this guy's camera, but released their grip on him. Afterwards he said, "it was great what you did, because they had their guns on me." And I said, "What?" I hadn't seen any guns. I was just acting by instinct. So I saved this guy from being taken hostage, but I don't think he ever told anybody back at the Embassy about it because no one ever made a comment about it to me afterwards. I supposed he was embarrassed he had such a close call, and I didn't say much about it either except perhaps to my closest colleagues, so as not to embarrass him further. So, this was never recognized in the Embassy, but I always felt pretty good about it. I tell you this now, since it comes to mind and I'll never have a better chance to retell it.

***

Q: Today is Monday, February 13, 1995. I'm Don Kienzle and I am pleased to continue the interview with Tony Freeman on his work in the Foreign Service. Last time we got through your tour in Argentina. Are there any things you would like to add to that portion of your career experience?

FREEMAN: Nothing comes to mind at the moment.

Q: Okay. Then we are up to about 1980 or 1981, I believe.

FREEMAN: 1980.

Q: And at that point you went to Italy as Labor Counselor?

FREEMAN: That's right. I had been back in the States on home leave at some stage and went to pay a call on a friend who happened to be the Executive Director of the European Bureau, Don Leidel. The issue of postings available in the European area naturally came up and he said, "By the way, we have a labor position opening up in Rome. We have a little problem there in Rome." He didn't go into the details at the time, but it seemed that the Labor Counselor and the rest of the Embassy there didn't get along very well, and the labor officer was being asked to curtail his assignment. So suddenly there was this position available, and I was asked if I would be interested. We said, "Yes, of course." My wife was with me, and she was an old friend of this guy, who had been personnel officer in Buenos Aires years ago, and she was even more enthusiastic than me. So we jumped at the chance, and I got the assignment to go to Rome.

Q: Did you have any Italian?

FREEMAN: No, I had no Italian language capability at that point, except for a few choice words in dialect which I had picked up as a kid from the old neighborhood in Newark, and so I had to undertake standard Italian language training at FSI. I met two very important people at that time. One was Ambassador Gardner, who is now Ambassador to Spain. He had been Professor of International Law at Columbia University and was prominent in Democratic Party politics. He was in Washington on consultations from his post in Rome, where he had been assigned as Ambassador some time shortly before. At that time, he was focused on the notion that the United States should take a different tack towards the Italian Communist Party. The Italians had a style all their own generally and he thought the Italian Communists were different from the rest of the Communist world. He believed we were selling ourselves short by not having a friendlier relationship with the Italian Communists.

He wanted a labor officer more in tune with that, one who might help bring the AFL-CIO on board. The previous senior labor counselor, Herb Baker, was vitriolically opposed and made no bones about it. Gardner asked my opinion, and I said I would be happy to discuss it further with the AFL-CIO to see what their views might be on the issue. I had never before had a labor assignment in Europe, so I didn't know precisely what the AFL-CIO position was. Of course, the AFL-CIO was strongly anti-communist and refused to have any contact with communists on principle, but I didn't have a precise fix on how it assessed the Italian situation. So, it was in that context that I came to meet an unforgettable character named Irving Brown. Now Irving was a legendary figure of the AFL-CIO, a hero of the Cold War. His exploits were well-known to all labor officers world-wide, and I was particularly an avid fan of Irving's from a distance, having heard many stories about him. Very little has ever been printed about his exploits.

Q: He never wrote his memoirs.FREEMAN: He never wrote his memoirs although there was a rather superficial book written about him later by a Washington labor reporter. He was quite secretive, and I can tell you more about that later. In any case, this was the man who had played a key role in so many Western European countries, in Italy for one thing, and particularly in France. He had played a key role in cleaning up the Marseilles docks [from Communist control] to get Marshall Plan supplies rolling into southern France. He had helped to create the Force Ouvriere (FO) trade union movement, splitting it from the CGT (the Communist trade union center) in France. He did similar things in Italy, and he was active in Germany. This was the legendary figure of the AFL-CIO who ran its international affairs department while being based in Paris. So for me it was a great honor to meet him. We had a breakfast meeting in a downtown hotel in Washington, which I thought went pretty well. I talked to him about Gardner, and also met with some other folks in the AFL-CIO. Afterwards, I was able to report back to Gardner some nuances that my predecessor at the post had not as to how the AFL-CIO felt about contacts with the Communists. For one thing, the AFL-CIO itself was not going to have any contact with the Communist trade unionists, at least not out in the open. That was and still is their policy. ...Well, I have to revise that, because that has now changed. But that was their declared policy at the time.

But it was another question as to whether the Embassy should have contact. The AFL-CIO didn't want the labor officer to have contact with the Communists, because the labor officer was to a certain degree associated with the AFL-CIO. Even though he was a Foreign Service Officer and worked for the State Department, by the very fact that he had the title "Labor Counselor," the AFL-CIO felt the Italian labor movement associated this person with the AFL-CIO and the AFL-CIO felt it should have something to say about what the Counselor should or should not be doing in Italy. So I was able to report back to the State Department that there was a certain degree of nuance in the AFL-CIO position which had not been evident before. Irving didn't care if the Embassy had contact with Italian communists so long as it wasn't the Labor Counselor doing it.

So off I went to Rome in late 1980. It was an exciting assignment. I took language training for four months before that in the summer time and arrived in Italy towards the end of the year - around November. At that time there was a united labor movement. Italy historically had a politicized trade union movement. I mentioned Serafino Romualdi before. Serafino had written a book called Peons and Presidents. Serafino had served in the OSS in the Second World War, and among his adventures, he was involved in helping set up a meeting between the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, and the Communists that took place shortly after the Allied forces liberated Naples, to discuss the future configuration of Italian politics and the trade unions. At that meeting, it was agreed that each major political party would get one-third control of the trade union movement. The Christian Democrats would have one-third, the Communists one-third, and the Socialists one-third, if memory serves. So the Italian trade union movement had its origins in politics. No question about that.

When I got there in 1980, there was "a united front" or something like that of the three trade union federations (CGIL, CISL and UIL). At that stage the three federations had undergone some evolution. One was the CGIL, which was a predominantly Communist, but it also had a minority in it comprised of Socialists who were allies of the Communists. The CGIL was the major trade union federation in the country. The second largest federation was the CISL. This was the old Christian Democratic oriented trade union movement, which at that time was split into a number of factions and had a lot of philo-third world types in it. It had undergone some evolution also, and in fact by the time I got there, a faction which was anti-Christian Democratic Party was in control of the CISL. If not anti-, at least it was not aligned with the traditional moderate right wing leadership faction of the Christian Democratic party. The CISL was led by people who had come out of the left-wing Catholic workers' movement and included odd socialists who were further to the left than the original moderate wing of the Christian Democratic party. The third trade union federation was the UIL; this was a grab bag of Socialists and so-called "lay" parties. The UIL had a socialist majority, which is interesting because as I said before there was a socialist minority in the CGIL as well. Then the UIL had as minority factions several other so-called secular parties like the Social Democrats, the Republicans and others. So those were the three basic trade union federations, but by that time they were all nominally aligned in one united confederation or trade union central (although the three federations retained their separate structures).

Q: When did they merge?

FREEMAN:I think they had merged in the 1970s. I'm rusty on Italian history at the moment, but a heavy rash of labor strikes in Italy in 1969, known as the "Hot Autumn", produced a shift to the left in Italian politics and led to the center-right Christian Democrat Party (PDC), which had headed all the postwar governments of Italy, entering into a political understanding with the Communist Party (PCI) known as the "Historic Compromise". The PDC and the PCI were Italy's two largest parties and traditional rivals, and the PDC traditionally dominated the national government, with the support of the smaller "lay" parties and in more recent years with the support of the Socialist Party (PSI) as well. But in the 1970s the PDC and the PCI came to an agreement looking to the prospect of the two major parties' sharing the reins of government. At around the same time, following the Hot Autumn, the three labor federations had come closer together and formed the "United Federation CGIL-CISL-UIL". That was its formal name.

So it was a rather complicated political situation which is hard to reconstruct from memory now. The AFL was active in Italy shortly after the end of the second World War. Irving Brown represented the AFL in Europe before the merger of the AFL and the CIO in 1955. Irving came from the AFL side although I think he had some CIO connections, too. If I had understood him correctly, he had worked with an AFL Automobile Union which had started as a CIO union. The CIO was also active on the other side. In Italy, the AFL worked with the Christian Democrats whereas the CIO tended to work with the Socialists. It was in the US interest to work with both the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, the two major non-communist parties. But on the labor front, the AFL ran the show, and their historic relationship had been with the CISL and the Christian Democrats.

By the time I got there, a deformation had taken place in the CISL, so that a faction was in control which was often aligned with the Communist CGIL leadership (and was anxious to serve as facilitators trying to bring the CGIL closer to the U.S. Embassy and the AFL-CIO) whereas it treated the leadership of the much smaller UIL with some contempt. After looking over the situation, I concluded it was going to be hard to work with the CISL, because its international affairs office was committed to getting us to make contact and normalize relations with the CGIL at home while at the same time it was supporting revolutionary "nonaligned" unions in the developing countries inimical to US interests. With Italian government funds, for example, it was supporting the FMLN unions in El Salvador. After an initially good beginning, I noticed the head of the CISL union federation was standoffish about further meeting me. The same for the head of the CISL international affairs department. So even though the CISL had historically been great friends of the American Embassy and the AFL, by the time I got there the political situation had evolved and my relations with the CISL leadership particularly seemed strained.

On the other hand, there was a rising, ambitious political figure named Bettino Craxi in the Italian Socialist Party, the leader of that party, who, although he had originally come out of the party's left-wing, adopted a stridently anti-Communist posture as his long-range strategy to take over the reins of government himself as Prime Minister. For the smaller Socialist Party to gain the Prime Ministership, it would be necessary to win the support of the mainstream of the Christian Democrat Party, and that meant breaking the latent threat of a political alliance between the Christian Democrats and the Communist party, which had almost materialized in the 1970s and which was always lurking around the corner as a possibility.It actually did happen at the regional level, so that Communist governments came to power at the regional and local levels. There was a de facto understanding that Communists would run the city government of Rome and other municipalities while the Christian Democrats would control the National Assembly or whatever it was called, and lead the national government in alliance with the Socialists and lay parties. The Christian Democrats had fallen short of agreeing to alternate with the Communists to head the national government. But it was not out of the question that this still might happen.

In the meantime, Craxi came along and he was riding a different horse. He wanted to become prime minister himself on a Socialist, anti-Communist, pro-NATO ticket. In terms of political paradigms, this was the opposite of that of an erstwhile alliance between the Communists and the Christian Democrats. It meant getting the Christian Democrats to support him in the Parliament and turning them against the idea of a political alliance with the Communists. It also meant getting the Socialist party to look right rather than left, i.e. uniting the Socialists under Craxi and getting the Socialist Party to turn its back on its prior history of aligning with the Communists. On the labor front, this suggested to me the possibility that the Socialist minority might be split from the Communist-dominated CGIL. I thought that the best thing for me to do first was to work with the Socialists within the UIL. Now this was a small labor federation dominated by one individual, a Socialist named Giorgio Benvenuto. At one time, he had very clearly played with the left-wing Socialists as well, but by this time he had hitched his wagon to the Craxi star and was playing the right-wing Socialist, pro-U.S. line.

So I decided to cultivate the UIL, and at the same time the Socialist minority in the CGIL, sending their leaders on exchange visits to the U.S. together with the aim of facilitating their coming more closely together. I don't mean to say that we really were going to affect the final outcome of what happened in Italy. The labor sphere wasn't strong enough to decide the overall national political game, but it could make a significant contribution. Without giving up on trying to cultivate the CISL as well, the policy I arrived at was to work with the UIL and the socialists in the CGIL, and to see whether it was possible to split the Socialists from the Communists in the CGIL. I assumed that Craxi would force the two Socialist factions in the Italian trade union movement to work more closely together anyway, and I thought we could help on the margins. So, I arranged for the head of the Socialist wing of the CGIL, Ottaviano del Turco, to meet with the AFL-CIO while on a visit to the U.S. This was the first time that this had happened and it took a little doing to arrange it.

Q: Did Irving Brown agree?

FREEMAN:Yes, Irving came around on this. In fact, I think he instinctively agreed, even though it was not his idea. Irving was an interesting character. He didn't tolerate others mucking around in what he regarded as his turf. This was the kind of thing he would have done on his own if he had thought of it, but he agreed the idea had merit and supported it. But that's not to say he trusted me in the beginning. And in fact certain things happened, which I later discovered he might have had something to do with. He played things close to the chest and did not instantly warm to people he didn't know, including for example younger staffers in the AFL-CIO, whom he immediately suspected of being members of the new Left anti-Vietnam War generation. For a long time, he held me off, even though I thought we had a great initial meeting in Washington, and I was looking forward to cooperating with him. But this was slow in coming on his part. And I have the suspicion that he may even have said something to the CISL early on which poisoned my relationship with them at the start.

But then something very interesting and drastic happened, which even today I still don't know the full meaning of. When I arrived in Rome around November, I was told that there had been an instruction to all European posts to report on this new phenomenon in Poland called Solidarnosc or Solidarity [in English]. Anything we could pick up anywhere around the world about Solidarity should be reported back to Washington. This made lots of sense. Anyway, shortly after I got to Rome, I discovered that Lech Walesa was coming to Rome in December to meet with the Pope. We immediately looked into this and soon I came in contact with the International Affairs Director of the UIL, a guy named Luigi Scricciolo. I can't recall now whether we looked him up or he looked us up - I believe it was the latter - but soon he and his wife were visiting us frequently in the Embassy. Both worked in the UIL. They had been to Poland and they had styled themselves as Polish experts. They had been in and out of Poland several times and they came to the Embassy to tell us about their meetings with Solidarity and plans to provide Solidarity with further support. And in the course of the meeting they told us that Walesa was coming to Rome in December or January at the invitation of the Pope and that he, Scricciolo, was the United Federation's control officer for Walesa's visit. So naturally I asked him if he would set up a meeting for me with Walesa. He claimed that he was also making arrangements for Irving Brown to come to meet with Walesa while he was here. So I got on the phone and called Irving. He was angry when he learned that I had stumbled on to this, and refused to discuss it further.

In the end, Irving didn't come to Rome himself, but an international trade union leader of Polish origin who was close to the AFL-CIO came in his stead, and he presumably did meet with Walesa. Moreover, Scricciolo failed to arrange my meeting with Walesa, although he came to the Embassy frequently to report on what reputedly had happened during the Walesa visit. He came in to tell us everything, or at least he made it appear that he was telling us everything, and wanted us to know about it. Sometimes, he would come by the Embassy on his own, sometimes together with his wife, Paola Elia. And when they came in separately, we would sometimes get curious signals, like the wife would be in talking to us - she was an attractive woman incidentally - and all of a sudden there would be a phone call from Scricciolo, her husband, askin"Is my wife over there?" And five minutes later, he would come running in the Embassy. The UIL Headquarters was right behind the Embassy physically, so it didn't take long to come over. There may have been a pedestrian explanation for this but it appeared strange at the time.

So Walesa came to Rome, but I never got to meet with him. I was quite disappointed, although we collected information on the visit and sent that in to Washington. Walesa came to Rome to see the Pope, but the visit was hosted by the United Federation, CGIL-CISL-UIL. And as I said, Scricciolo, while he was from the UIL side, said he had been appointed control officer, or as he called it the United Federation's "security officer", for the Walesa visit. Shortly after Walesa left, Scricciolo came and said, "Look, I'm sorry. It was impossible to have Walesa meet with you, but one of his people is still here. Would you like to meet with him?" And I said, "Sure."

So shortly thereafter we had a meeting over in UIL headquarters with a guy who, I was told, was from Solidarity. I made the mistake of not bringing along my own translator for this meeting. Actually we had a secretary in our section who spoke Polish, and who had, in fact, been our political section secretary in Buenos Aires. It was a mistake not to have brought our own translator. So we allowed UIL to translate for us at this meeting, whose participants included myself, my local Italian assistant, Mario Gallotti, the Scricciolos, three or four other people, the translator provided by Scricciolo, and the Polish guest, who was a young kid in his twenties.

Q: Do you remember his name?

FREEMAN:I don't have it at hand. I would in fact like to reconstruct that name. A very serious thing happened. I got into the meeting and shortly after the pleasantries - this is his first meeting with an American official - he asked for arms for the anti-Communist underground movement in Poland. I became alarmed, of course, suspecting this was some sort of provocateur. I politely listened for a while, then told him we were not in the arms business, made some innocuous remarks, and terminated the meeting at an early opportunity.And then about a year later we were shocked one day to learn that the Italian police had barged into the National Congress of the UIL being held in Florence, I believe, approached the podium, pulled Mr. Scricciolo down, and arrested him on the charge that he was a Bulgarian spy. This came as a tremendous shock. It was soon also alleged that he was involved in the attempt by that Turk Agca to assassinate the Pope.

Of course this was a very serious thing for us, because Scricciolo had been in the Embassy several times. Interestingly enough, after Walesa left town and I had this meeting with the young Polish nationalist set up, we didn't see very much of Scricciolo after that. He just faded away. He didn't come around to the Embassy as much and by this time I was dealing directly with his boss Benvenuto on most matters that I had to take up with the UIL. Our conversations with the Scricciolos had been mostly debriefings of them as to what was going on in Poland and very little else. And then there was this event about a year later when he was arrested.

And so we began to reconstruct what our relationship with the Scricciolos had been. We had to answer to Washington for this of course. It wasn't clear who he was. It came out at that time that Scricciolo was from the so-called "third faction" of UIL. In its origins this was sort of a militant Trotskyite, new-left element which presumably had grown disillusioned with radicalism over time, and Benvenuto evidently had brought people like this into the UIL mainstream to provide them a home and at the same time build up the UIL's meager rolls. Benvenuto began back pedaling. He downplayed the fact that Scricciolo had been his international affairs representative by saying that the position wasn't terribly important anyway, and that he really didn't trust Scricciolo and so forth and so on. In Washington, my predecessor, Herb Baker, sent a message to the Embassy saying that he knew Scricciolo and didn't trust him. "He's from the Left." Herb said.

Of course, he was from the left, but the question was which left and how far left. Virtually all the trade union leaders of Italy were from the left. If I had refrained from meeting Italian trade unionists who called themselves "left", I would have had hardly anybody to talk to and I wouldn't be doing my job. To be sure, I should have done a better job of looking up this guy's credentials when I first met him, that's true. Having met Scricciolo shortly after my having arrived in Rome, I don't think I knew he had been a member of the so-called "Third Faction", or even what that was, until after he had been arrested. I asked the relevant Embassy section if they had any information on Scricciolo, but they claimed they did not.

Incidentally, Scricciolo looked physically like Karl Marx. We kidded around and had code names for these people. Among ourselves in the Embassy, I used to call him either Karl Marx, because of his beard, or Sad Sack, from the Joe Fitzblick character in the Little Abner cartoon, because he always seemed to have a cloud hanging over his head. Here was Karl Marx with a beard, and he had a fairly striking young (peroxide) blond for a wife. That was something we puzzled over.

Well, both were accused of being Bulgarian spies, and later there was speculation in the press that maybe she was a Russian spy instead, while he was the Bulgarian spy. In Italy the press is salacious and quick to blow stories out of all proportion on the basis of very little hard facts. But it became clear that Scricciolo had been in Bulgaria, where he may indeed have had contact with Bulgarian officials. So, it was very possible that he did have a Bulgarian connection at the same time he was International Affairs Director of UIL. And I began thinking, well, here's the guy who arranged a meeting between Irving Brown (or one of his people) and Lech Walesa. This is really bad!

Oh, incidentally, the worst part of this story for me was that the young Pole whom I had met with turned out not to be a police spy, at least not according to press or any other accounts I've seen. When these accusations about Scricciolo surfaced, it was reported in the press that this young kid had been arrested when he got back to Poland for allegedly being "a CIA agent." The meeting he had with members of the American Embassy while in Rome was cited in the press reports as the core reason for his arrest. This was entirely plausible, of course, and I felt personally responsible if that were the case. And that meant he was not the police provocateur, but very possibly it was Scricciolo or his wife who was the source from which the Polish government had learned about our meeting.

And the guy was not really from Solidarity either. He was from another political movement there, a radical Catholic nationalist Polish movement, that was particularly strong in southern Poland, but it was not Solidarity. I forget the name of that group. He was arrested, but I heard later that he had been released. When I traveled to Poland some years later, I went to the town where he came from, but couldn't find him. I heard he was alive, but I don't know what happened to him. He might even have been a police spy. Maybe the whole story was phoney. I still don't know to this day.

But with regard to Scricciolo, he was detained but never convicted. He is said to have become crazy and ended up in an insane asylum. And his wife, Paola Elia, reportedly turned evidence against him, which perhaps helped drive him insane. He had always been on the edge anyway. But who was she? The whole thing was a mystery which was never totally resolved. But it turned out that Scricciolo's cousin was connected to the Red Brigades and had been involved in the kidnaping in Italy of an American general named Dozier. It was alleged that Scricciolo had something to do with that; and it was also alleged that he had something to do with the assassination attempt on the Pope. So this was a major event that happened while I was there which of course didn't do me any good. I was in the middle of it and it colored my relationship with the Italian trade unions, at least to some degree.

Even worse, it undoubtedly colored my relationship with the Embassy, although I don't recall anyone in the Embassy actually ever acknowledging this openly to me. But my relationship to the Embassy wasn't so great to begin with. This was my first assignment as labor officer in a large American Embassy in Europe, and I discovered that the relationships were entirely different from what I had known as labor officer up to that time. As Labor Counselor I had an assistant labor attachï¿½ working for me; I also had several locals and more than one secretary; and we were on our own floor. I had been used to working in an integrated fashion as part of the political section and working both labor and politics at the same time. When I got to Rome, the Political Section tended to see the Labor Office as apart from the rest of the Political Section, even though in terms of rank I was the third counselor in the Political Section. I noticed some resistance to my serving as Acting when the Political Counselor and the Political-Defense Counselor were away. This may have been influenced by the Scricciolo fiasco, but I had the feeling that the problem was more structural and basic than that.

The Embassy saw Labor as different from Political. Defense was political but Labor was not. Or to put it another way, defense issues were an important part of US political concerns in Italy, but labor wasn't. In Latin America we were more integrated. Once, I walked a cable up to the communications unit to get it out, and the clerk asked, "Oh, you're the Labor Counselor. You work for the Labor Department?," which was probably the worst insult you could throw at me at that time. I saw myself as a Foreign Service Officer integrated in the Political Section, but that's not how we were regarded.

Q: So the working atmosphere in the Embassy was pretty tense?

FREEMAN: Well, it was different, and I felt that I was not called in on a lot things that I should have been involved in. I was part of the larger country team, but not the smaller country team. Ambassador Gardner was full of praise for me when I first arrived, because he had his own agenda, which he thought I was going to help him advance. His agenda was to develop an accommodation to Eurocommunism, to get closer to the Italian Communists and convert them into NATO allies. This would politically legitimize them and probably even clear the way for their taking the reins of government. That was a game I didn't want to play, but I handled it in my own way. Do you want me to go into greater detail?

Q: Feel free, if you wish.

FREEMAN: Well, let's finish this picture of the Labor Counselor first. I did not have a close working relationship with the DCM. I had been used to working with the political counselor, the DCM, and the ambassador in every other post I had been to before that, because they all recognized the importance of labor. But this was Europe and here you had more layering in the embassy and an aura of super sophistication. It was an enormous American Embassy, and the DCM was not terribly interested in labor. This was the first time I had ever experienced this.

Q: Was he a career person?

FREEMAN: Yes, a career person. The Ambassador seemed more interested in labor than the DCM . This was true for Gardner's successor as well, Maxwell Raab. But the DCM didn't think labor was very interesting or important. I'm referring now to the second DCM I had at this post. This was also true of the second Political Counselor I had as immediate boss at this post. The latter thought the Labor Section was eating up too much of the resources at the disposal of the Political Section. I was asked to allow the Assistant Labor Attache to do straight out political reporting, which I permitted on an ad hoc basis, bul resisted having this position abolished and transferred outright to the main part of the Political section. Soon after I left, the Embassy moved to abolish the Assistant Labor Attachï¿½ position.

Throughout the time I was in Rome, I recognized that I was not a member of the inner circle of the Embassy and that hurt me. I tend to think the base of the problem I had was bureaucratic in nature rather than a reaction to the Scricciolo affair, but the latter undoubtedly helped to reinforce the tendency in the Embassy political section to downplay labor and the role of the Embassy's labor office. In retrospect, I recognize that I made a number of mistakes, including going to that meeting with the Pole without having taken due precautions. I particularly felt at fault if it was true that this Pole got himself punished back in Poland because of the meeting I had with him, even though if that were true, the most sensitive thing there - aside from the fact of the meeting itself - was the line of conversation which he himself had initiated, that is the provocative request he put to me in a room full of people.

On top of that, there was the fact that I had been dealing with Scricciolo, who was accused of being a super spy and an assassin and all these other things, about which to this day I don't know the full truth. But if I had made a mistake, so had Irving Brown, because Irving had arranged the Walesa meeting with an AFL-CIO ally through Scricciolo and Irving also had some meetings of his own with Scricciolo's wife who was interested in reviewing his personal archives for a story she wanted to write.

Q: Was Irving Brown's meeting compromised as a result of Scricciolo's activities?

FREEMAN: The fact that Walesa had a meeting while he was in Rome with a representative of the international trade union movement close to the AFL-CIO, I think, did surface in the press, but nothing about the content, nor was much made about this in public, so far as I know or remember. So that's interesting.

Q: Did Scricciolo attend the meeting between the AFL-CIO representative and Walesa?

FREEMAN: I don't think so. Irving just had Scricciolo set up the meeting, but after that he would not let Scricciolo be part of it - or at least so I believe.

Q: How united was the United Federation? Did it actually coordinate policy?

FREEMAN: It strove to take common positions on issues. But my strategy was accurate in the sense that internal cleavages were beginning to take place. This division had nothing to do with us. It had to do with the fact that this rising Socialist political star named Craxi was surging to the top, drawing lots of people to him and, in so doing, shifting the tectonic plates of Italian politics. You were either for Craxi or against him, and the UIL Socialists were for him, and the CGIL Socialists were for him, and that was creating tensions to a certain degree inside the CGIL. The socialist faction within CGIL never formally split from the communist leadership but fissures were being created within the CGIL, which was exactly what I had hoped for and what I was working to take advantage of. Moreover, the United Front actually did begin formally to break up as an entity at this time. Now they're back together again; they just recently got back together again.

But for a period of years beginning at this time they did split, because the CGIL Communists were accused by the rest of the trade union movement of being too close to the political leadership of the Communist Party and not defending purely trade union interests. The division was over the scala mobile or wage indexation issue. There had been a wage indexation policy and the Christian Democrat dominated government went to the trade union movement and urged the unions to cooperate in structural adjustment in Italy [maintaining that there could not be one-for-one wage indexation for every percentage point increase in the cost of living; otherwise it would just contribute to another round of inflation that would ending up hurting the workers worse]. The entire trade union leadership understood that, including the Communists in the CGIL who were led by a very accomplished and popular labor leader named Luciano Lama.

But the Communist Party leadership for obvious political reasons could not accept it. Why should the Communist Party do a favor for the "quadripartite government" (PDC-PSI-PRI-PSD)? So the party wouldn't go along with it and that created tensions within the trade union movement. The Communists got blamed for holding up a social pact on the wage indexation issue, and that helped to spark divisions within CGIL and led for a while to a formal dissolution of the United Federation, CGIL-CISL-UIL, although the CGIL socialists did not split from the CGIL.

As for the Communist leadership of the CGIL, I told you earlier that the AFL-CIO did not have a problem with the Embassy's meeting with the Communists as long as it wasn't the Labor Counselor. And so I wanted my deputy, the Assistant Labor Attachï¿½, to be the Embassy officer to undertake this, so that I could oversee this process even though I wasn't going to be the interlocutor myself. The Political Counselor or the DCM decided against it. They wanted another officer in the Political Section proper to do that.

But I insisted on being in the initial meeting with the (Communist) head of the CGIL international affairs department, when we informed him that the Embassy was prepared to open a direct dialogue with the communist faction of the CGIL. I wanted this so that the word would be spread in the CGIL and the larger Italian trade union movement that I was involved in this development, that is to avoid the impression that the Embassy Labor office was an irrelevant piece of furniture out of the picture. So we had a discreet luncheon meeting with the head of the International Department of the CGIL to announce that another officer in the Embassy was going to "handle the account" so to speak. Things have changed now, because the CGIL is in the ICFTU, and the AFL-CIO deals with them, but this was back in the early 1980s. Unfortunately, the Embassy officer talked with the CGIL representative only about national political or policy matters. The officer had too many other issues to take up besides labor, even though I fed him questions about the trade union scene before each meeting. Part of the deal was that we would get together beforehand and talk over the questions he was going to ask. But this didn't work out very well from my point of view, because we weren't getting back any useful trade union information. The Embassy political officer found the CGIL contact such a rich source of information on political and foreign policy questions that he never got around to labor issues.So I think those were the major things that happened in Italy when I was there. It was an exciting period. I enjoyed Italy very much, but I had some bureaucratic problems in the Embassy and in my second year I had the Scricciolo experience, which unfortunately cast a heavy shadow over a good part of my assignment. I had fairly good contacts, but I can't say I ever came anywhere near mastering the country as in my previous assignments. Incidentally, it was at this time that I began a reconciliation with CISL. When the Scricciolo affair broke publicly, the CISL international affairs chief named Emilio Gabaglio broke his longstanding standoffishness with me and invited me to lunch. He said that what bothered him most was that Irving had arranged a meeting with Walesa through Scricciolo at the UIL, rather than through the CISL, when it was CISL which had closer historic ties with the AFL-CIO and also CISL which had better contacts with Polish Solidarnosc than the UIL. Gabaglio, incidentally is now the Secretary General of the ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. CISL, as a Catholic trade union, particularly had good ties with the Polish Catholic intellectual, Modzelewski, who later became President of the country. Gabaglio said he felt that Irving's dealings with the UIL meant the AFL-CIO had lost confidence in CISL, but my relations with Gabaglio and with his boss, CISL secretary general Pierre Carniti, seemed to improve after that.

Q: Wasn't there a time in the late 1940s when the US Government was helping fund CISL?

FREEMAN: Well, what you're talking about is what I implied earlier, and this is that there was a time from 1947 on until the AFL-CIO merger in 1955, and maybe beyond, when the CIO (Victor Reuther) helped a certain faction in the Italian trade union moment, the UIL, and the AFL helped another faction, the CISL. What you're asking me, I think, is whether this was done with the knowledge and support of the U.S. Government. And the answer to that has to be "yes". At one point, the lead man for carrying out AFL policy in Italy was the Embassy labor attache, ("Colonel") Tom Lane.

Q: I believe they were conduits.

FREEMAN: They were conduits, yes. That's in the record. You probably know as much about this as I. There have been quite a few Italian books about this history, although it's hard to tell how much of it is straight and how much of it exaggeration. To add to this, however, I can tell you that once I did find in my safe some old Embassy memos about rivalry between the AFL and the CIO and funding relationships which each separately maintained with their respective trade union allies in Italy, but my impression is that this was with Marshall Plan funds, i.e. European economic reconstruction funds, not something else.

Q: But on your watch, there was no direct funding?

FREEMAN: No, absolutely not. No, by that time, the Italians were on their own, and they were doing a great job of it. [laughter]. Moreover, by this time, the three Italian trade union federations had their own technical assistance cooperation programs abroad funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Q: Any other highlights of your tour in Italy?

FREEMAN: None that I can think of at the moment. That's enough for now.

Q: Would you describe how you were then assigned as S/IL [Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Coordinator International Labor Affairs]?

FREEMAN: Yes. I had gotten hints that there was going to be a change in S/IL. John Warnock was the S/IL during my time in Italy. It was hinted to me but never clearly stated that maybe I was a candidate to replace him. Irving Brown, who had started off being hostile or at least distant, was by this time quite supportive. We had gone through a lot with the Scricciolo business. I don't mean together, but separately. We had experienced similar problems.

Q: Trial by fire.

FREEMAN: You might say that. So he warmed up. He seemed pleased by my ideas about how to work the Italian trade union movement, and he opened up more with me. I don't mean totally; of course not. Not Irving. But we spoke more frequently and I was able to learn a lot about Irving and how he operated. So we got closer and there was no doubt that because of the relationship with him during my time in Italy that I was appointed as S/IL. There was a luncheon meeting between George Shultz, Larry Eagleburger, Lane Kirkland, and Irving Brown, in which my appointment was sealed. So I came back to take the job. I had to curtail to come back. My family was very upset that I cut out my third year in Rome, which, aside from the professional problems I had to deal with at the Embassy, was the greatest post to which we had ever been assigned. Of course it was a lovely place to live.

Q: This would have been in 1983?

FREEMAN: I came back and took the S/IL position in August 1983. I held that position for a little over ten years, from August 1983 until the end of October 1994. Well, by 1994 it wasn't called S/IL anymore. We had a merger [within the State Department of the labor function with democracy and human rights to form the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor] some time in 1993. I'm not clear what date to place on the merger because de facto we merged pretty early in the Democratic [Clinton] Administration in early 1993, but the formal merger and establishment of the Bureau didn't take place until some time in 1994.

Q: Do you want to describe the issues early on in your tenure as S/IL?FREEMAN: Among the various issues, the ILO [International Labor Organization] loomed large, and that was because the Soviets had launched a campaign around that time to destroy the supervisory machinery of the ILO. They said that the ILO was now applying Western political and labor standards against them. The history is, prior to that, in 1977, the United States withdrew from the ILO, because the AFL-CIO felt that the ILO was applying a double standard favoring the Soviet Union and the Communists. The ILO had become overly politicized and was discussing issues which, from the point of view of the United States, should have been discussed in the United Nations General Assembly or Security Council, but not the ILO. The ILO was discussing international security issues rather than labor issues. More specifically, it would discuss what was in fact a national security question such as arms control or Arab- Israeli issues and try to paint a thin labor veneer over it. The Communists and "non-aligned" allies would say, "We are going to talk now about the violation of labor rights in Palestine", when in fact this was part of a concerted UN-wide campaign to isolate Israel diplomatically, or even force it from the United Nations system. And on top of that from the U.S. point of view, the ILO was applying a double standard by going after worker rights violations in Latin America, which was considered to be the backyard of the United States, but it was doing very little or nothing with regard to the more systematic violations of workers' rights in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. So in 1975 Kissinger as Secretary of State gave two years advance notice of the U.S. intention to leave the ILO unless satisfactory reforms were implemented and in 1977 the Carter Administration made the decision to withdraw (over the objections of the State Department, incidentally). By 1980, however, the ILO began to focus more on investigating labor rights violations in the Communist world and more commitments were made in this regard, so the United States returned officially in 1980.

That put the shoe on the other foot, and the Soviets soon began to charge that a double standard was now being applied against them. That's when they launched their campaign attacking the ILO for allegedly applying a peculiarly Western interpretation of international labor conventions against Communist countries and not taking into account the local "culture" of their societies. The Soviets tried to dismantle the ILO standards supervisory system, or at least that's where we thought they were headed. So Irving Brown came to the State Department and argued that a major effort was needed to defeat this Soviet campaign.

It was felt that the U.S. Labor Department, which had the lead role within the USG for ILO affairs, was not doing enough and was not up to the battle. The suggestion was that the State Department select a special envoy to go around the world and convince national leaders that the Soviets had to be stopped in their campaign. There was a precedent for this in that Dan Horowitz, the first of the U.S. labor attaches to have been assigned abroad back in the 1940s, was sent on a global trip in the mid-1970s in an effort to persuade the major ILO member countries that something had to be done about the ILO's double standard and excessive politicization or else the U.S. would withdraw from the Organization. So, Irving Brown persuaded the State Department that the Labor Department was dragging its feet on the standards supervisory machinery issue and I was assigned to set up the mission of a new global special envoy. I worked with Irving and he suggested as candidate a fellow named Gibson from Short Hills, New Jersey, who had been Assistant Secretary of Commerce in some prior administration. He came from the maritime world and was a personal friend of Lane Kirkland's. So he was selected to be a special envoy, and I helped to write the talking points and set up a global trip for him to make demarches around the world. I spent a good part of my time on that the first year I came on board.

This was also the period of the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy, NED. It is noteworthy that at this time there was a major increase in labor funding to fight the Communists. Historically, the international labor program fared very well under the Republicans.

Q: This was during the Reagan administration?

FREEMAN: Yes

Q: Did the Gibson mission work out all right?

FREEMAN:Yes. We were successful. The Soviets were unsuccessful in their ILO campaign, and they finally gave up on it. That took a couple of years. Gibson went on his global tour to urge other countries not to support the Soviets in the ILO and eventually the Soviets gave up.

Q: What was the S/IL role in NED?

FREEMAN: I did not play a direct role. At this time Larry Eagleburger was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P) at State, and he had a deputy, who had previously been Ambassador in Geneva. That gentleman, Gerry Hellman, was put in charge of working closely with the NED. The NED rules were that the State Department could make known its position on NED funding proposals, but the NED had the freedom to override any State Department objections. Hellman's job, which I backstopped to some degree, was to circulate the NED project proposals to the embassies, get their comments, and report any perceived objections back to NED. Then it was up to the NED whether or not to accept our view. From time to time NED did not go along. That was accepted by Larry and his deputy Gerry, but it was not understood by our embassies, which sometimes got upset over these issues.

There was an incident in which the AFL-CIO institute for Latin America (AIFLD) came up with a project proposal to do a political education program in connection with elections in Panama. This was like a League of Women Voters' education program, but the fact was the Panamanian unions working with AIFLD had their own candidate for the Presidency of the country and the proposed "education program" was an indirect assist to the unions' political candidate.

And when the Ambassador down there got wind of it, he sent in strong objections by cable. He said, it was "a hare-brained scheme" for the United States to fund a project appearing to interfere in a political election in Panama, which had a long history of resentment over U.S. involvement in its internal affairs. And to try to influence the Panamanian elections via the labor unions no less, what a "harebrained" idea! But Eagleburger's deputy Hellman forced the Ambassador to withdraw his cable, because to have killed the proposal outright would have violated the founding statutes of the NED setting it up as an independent albeit Congressionally-funded institution and would have nipped in the bud the critically important need to demonstrate NED's independence from the U.S. Executive Branch. Incidentally, Lane Kirkland was one of the early advocates of the NED concept. President Reagan announced the establishment of the NED in a famous speech to Westminster in London in 1982, but it was Lane Kirkland who played a major role in inspiring the idea.

In fact, he was a principal member of the board and he undoubtedly had something to do with Carl Gershman's being appointed the first executive director of the NED, a position Carl still holds. >From its inception, the AFL-CIO has been one of the NED's four "core grantees" and remains so, although its share of the funding has declined over the years as the total number of NED grantees has increased.

So [NED's autonomy] was part of the ground rules. The role I sought to play in this was to convey to Irving Brown project ideas that occurred to our labor attaches in the field which the AFL-CIO might wish to undertake as one of the NED's "core grantees". My original idea - and I think Irving's too - was that all the labor advisors from the Department's geographic bureaus and I would meet periodically with Irving and his institute directors together to consult about how the USG could assist the AFL-CIO's strategy worldwide, but there was resistance from the institute directors to this kind of coordination. They saw this as stepping on their turf and rejected it. SI ended up consulting with Irving informally alone.

Q: Did the project in Panama go forward?

FREEMAN: Oh, yes, it did. It went forward.

Q: Was it successful?

FREEMAN: It was unsuccessful in terms of the [labor-backed] candidate; the candidate lost, as I recall, but it may have helped introduce the principle that it was not illegitimate for workers and unions to play an active role in Panamanian elections and the project didn't create any great problems that I can recall, despite the Ambassador's initial fears.

Q: The United States wasn't accused of interfering in the internal affairs of Panama?

FREEMAN: No. Well, maybe a bit, but not to any great extent. But judging from the propaganda campaign which the USSR and the Communists launched against the NED, calling it a "CIA front", certainly they were exercised over the creation of NED. [I mentioned the fact that] Lane Kirkland was involved in helping to create the NED. The whole purpose of the NED as a "quango" (or quasi independent organization) was to get away from the legacy of alleged USG interference in the sovereign affairs of other countries via clandestine means (i.e. the CIA), which had surfaced in a proliferation of accusations in the 1960s and 1970s beginning with the notorious Phillip Agee book, as you may recall. From all accounts, there had been in the past CIA "conduit funding" as you have called it, to help subsidize and support the democratic international trade union movement, which permitted our opponents to claim this was some kind of spy operation of the United States, whereas what the AFL-CIO wanted to see [with NED] was publicly transparent democracy building, and therefore the CIA should not and could not be involved.

NED should be an open institution. That was the whole idea behind it. The United States would fully acknowledge that this was government funding appropriated by the United States Congress aimed at promoting democracy around the world. This was a legitimate activity and it was much better that this be carried on out in the open for all to see, rather than its being funded and implemented clandestinely. The program was to be fully accountable to the Congress and to the public with no under the counter stuff. Nothing spooky about it. That's why it was written into the law that the State Department could advise the NED board whether or not a particular NED project was consistent with US foreign policy objectives, but in the end the NED would have the total freedom to override U.S. foreign policy, and in fact on some occasions it did.

Q: Were there other issues that you dealt with at that time?

FREEMAN: I can't remember them all at this time, but one of the major issues I got involved in - and am pleased that I played an important part - was in reversing a policy, which had developed over a 35 year period, in which the US did not ratify any ILO convention. This was a period throughout which we were no longer interested in looking at ILO conventions for purposes of ratification and during which a convenient theory had sprung up that the United States could legally ratify only maritime conventions. Something like seven conventions had been ratified prior to the 35 year period I'm talking about, and six of the seven were maritime conventions. The seventh was a procedural convention having to do with change in the status of the ILO from a League of Nations agency to a United Nations agency. So the theory was that we could only ratify conventions that dealt with matters that were 100 percent in the realm and competency oFederal law. And in the United States it is state law that governs many labor issues. So therefore we could not get involved in ILO conventions except for the maritime conventions, and these only because maritime law in the U.S. was exclusively a matter oFederal Government jurisdiction. That was the theory. But around 1984 or 85 the State Department and Labor Department received a visit, which Irving Brown had arranged, from an old French colleague of his named Gabriel Ventejol.

Ventejol was at the time President of France's Economic and Social Council, protocol-wise a high-ranking position in the French Government, and, I guess he was an old Socialist buddy of Irving's from maybe during or right after the war. He came from the Force Ouvriere (FO) union. He came to the United States to argue that the United States had to change its policy on ratification of ILO conventions because of the Soviet campaign to dismantle the ILO's supervisory machinery. The argument the Soviets were using was: The United States doesn't ratify conventions; why should any other country which has ratified these conventions be subject to them and judged about their compliance when the so-called leader of the Free World doesn't even bother to ratify ILO conventions? So we felt it was incumbent on us to try to change that policy. I worked closely with Irving on this.

Irving went to the Chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, Orrin Hatch, [R-Utah], who was on opposite sides from the AFL-CIO on almost every U.S. domestic issue, but who was a good anti-Communist. He idolized Irving as a hero of the Cold War, the field marshal oU.S. forces fighting the Cold War on the labor front. Irving painted for Hatch a picture of the ILO as the battleground in which East fought the West for ideological leadership of the world's trade union movement. Hatch accepted the position that Irving took, and we in S/IL took, that it was necessary for the United States to make a good faith effort to ratify more ILO conventions if we were to take full advantage of the ILO's machinery to take the attack to the Soviets in the ILO. This was needed if the U.S. wanted to continue using the ILO workers' rights conventions ourselves as a weapon to condemn the Soviets and communists for their human rights violations. So that was the genesis of the hearings which Senator Hatch convened in 1985 or 1986. Secretary of State Shultz led off. It's interesting that it wasn't the Labor Department that took the lead. At this point the Labor Department was not terribly anxious to move down this road. The Labor Department was reflecting the pressure of the U.S. business community which opposed ratification of ILO conventions and didn't want us traveling down this road.

Q: What about the Commerce Department? I thought the Commerce Department was supposed to reflect the position of the business community.

FREEMAN: Commerce played a role in ILO affairs, it's true, but the Labor Department was the lead agency on ILO matters in the USG and it was Secretary of Labor Brock who appeared along with Secretary Shultz in the Hatch hearing. But the Labor Department only came around after Brock heard Shultz make a strong supportive statement in favor of a new policy on ILO conventions at the hearing. Incidentally, Paul Hilburn, the IO Bureau officer responsible for ILO affairs at that time, was very much involved as drafting officer for Shultz's testimony. Together, we put strong language in the testimony, and Shultz read a statement that it was "in the United States' national and foreign policy interest" to consider ratification of ILO conventions. When Brock heard that and saw that Hatch was enthusiastically in favor, he went along. Hatch had convened the hearings with Irving Brown's strong encouragement and the hearing produced a shift in US policy on this question. Hatch proposed a "two-track policy", that the US consider ILO conventions for ratification in pairs, examining one major and one minor convention at a time. Since that time the U.S. has ratified about seven more conventions. This is a much slower pace than Hatch envisioned, I think, but nevertheless it demonstrates that the U.S. can ratify ILO conventions.

Q: Seven?

FREEMAN: No, I'm wrong. The U.S. has ratified five conventions since then. The first one out of the box after the Hatch hearings was [ILO Convention] 144. Convention No. 144 was a procedural convention, which calls for tripartite participation in the United States on matters dealing with the ILO. In fact, a President's cabinet-level committee on the ILO had already been created in 1980 as part of the whole process of going back into the ILO, so we already had the machinery in place and were already in compliance with this particular convention. So it was easy to ratify.

One shrewd and helpful thing that the Labor Department did was to negotiate an important agreement which broke the deadlock within the U.S. Government and the U.S. tripartite community on this. The employers were opposed to our going down this road at all. But a tripartite agreement was reached between the USG, the AFL-CIO and the employer's association (USCIB) which said that the United States Government would not use the treaty process to try to change U.S. law, and we would only ratify conventions if U.S. law were already in compliance with the convention. If U.S. law were not in compliance but there was consensus among the three parties that we should ratify a particular ILO convention, the parties would first seek to change United States and state law through the normal legislative process in order to bring it into compliance with the ILO convention, and we would wait until we got U.S. law - federal and state law (of all 50 states) - all aligned before we would ratify the ILO convention. That was a compromise agreement, and with that, the employers ended their opposition to the TAPILS committee (Tripartite Advisory Committee on International Labor Standards) being used to examine the 'ratifiability' of ILO conventions. I think that was a major contribution, and the U.S. has since then ratified a number of ILO conventions and particularly, for the first time, a human rights convention. We have ratified Convention 105 on forced labor, which was the first human rights convention ever ratified by the United States in the ILO. Now there is another human rights convention being considered on discrimination (No. 111).

[December 2003 Update: Since this 1995 interview, the U.S. has ratified a total of 7 conventions following the breakthrough of the mid-1980s (or a total of 14 of the ILO's 185 conventions since US entry in the ILO in 1934), including two human rights conventions, No. 105 and more recently No. 182 on the worst forms of child labor. But the U.S. still has not ratified convention No. 111, even though it was cleared by TAPILS and sent up to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by the Executive Branch during the Clinton Administration].

So that was one major thing. The other thing that I unfortunately had to spend most of my time on from the very beginning was on the administrative front, defending the Labor Attachï¿½ Program. The labor officer function in the State Department was a program which was never fully accepted by the U.S. Foreign Service and Department management. It had a lot of adversaries, maybe not adversaries per se, but detractors who saw little relevance or value in the function. A lot of people just didn't understand why we needed a Labor Attachï¿½ Program. (End of tape)

[This questioning of the Labor Attachï¿½ Program] was just part of the normal State Department administrative/managerial procedure - the audit reports, the inspection reports, the annual operations, the goal statements, etc. While I think there are cultural or class hangups in the U.S. Foreign Service about labor and that does play a part, for the most part I don't think the questioning of the labor officer program originated in specific hostility against the labor program per se, that is, special targeting of this program on ideological or policy grounds. The problem arose more as a consequence of the State Department's perennial budget problems which have required one rationalization plan or reduction plan after another. In terms of the Department's overall budget, the labor officer function is really a tiny program dollar-wise, so eliminating it in its entirety is never going to have any kind of significant cost-saving impact, but when Ambassadors in the field are ordered to cut positions, they start with those they regard as being of lesser priority for them. So, the labor officer positions are vulnerable because when compared with everything else the Ambassador wants to have done at his post, there are too many other objectives which he regards as being of higher priority. He may not deprecate the labor program per se, it may just be he has other higher priorities he wants to protect. It's a comparative thing.

Every year there would be some proposal to eliminate one or another labor position someplace on budgetary grounds, and it was S/IL's job, as I saw it, to explain why we have a labor program and to resist the proposed cuts. I spent a large part of my time doing that. Then under Shultz there was a major push for cutting more State Department positions. There was a budget deficit of significant proportions and a special management team was established to make proposals on how we were going to reduce expenditure. A proposal was made to eliminate half the labor attachï¿½s in one year, and I fully expected that the plan was to eliminate the other half the following year, because the overall plan was presented as a two year package.

Q: Was that about 1987?

FREEMAN: 1986-87. It took me almost a whole year to deal with that.

Q: I remember I attended the meeting where Secretary Shultz presented his proposal to the Foreign Service. I went away in shock.

FREEMAN: Well, we totally beat that down. After it was clear that the proposal was defeated, Management nevertheless wanted me to come up with some token positions to show that the labor program had taken its "fair share" of cuts, and so I went through the roster and I discovered that in some geographic bureaus there were labor positions which had not been filled for years because of earlier agreements to cut them, but they still appeared on the roster as if they had not been cut. So in a magnanimous gesture, I eliminated these "rotten boroughs" that existed on paper only. Actually I had a pretty good scorecard up until maybe three or so years before I left the job as S/IL in terms of preserving the number of overseas labor officer positions worldwide. But at some point I really began losing battles one after the other. Until then I in fact had a damn good record of not only defeating attempts to cut labor positions but of actually gaining some positions.

Q: Could you describe how you handled the 1986-87 problem? Who were your allies?

FREEMAN: Well, the usual ones you would suspect. Essentially we have a Labor Attachï¿½ Program because it is desired by constituencies outside the State Department. Now one of State's problems was that the Department did not have much of a constituency in the general American public. We were always complaining in the Foreign Service that we had no support among the American people at large and no one understood the Foreign Service in the public, or up on the Hill. The Department needed a constituency if it wanted to survive. We [in the Labor Attachï¿½ Program] did have a constituency - in fact two of them. Our two major constituencies were the Labor Department and the American trade union movement. So it was obvious that I had to coordinate and work with these constituencies to ensure they understood that a program which they found to be in their interest was going down the drain if they didn't speak up. A large part of what I did was to encourage them to speak out publicly in favor of the State Department's labor program on timely occasions. I frequently did papers justifying the program on economic and political grounds and arguing why the USG needed a labor program. But in the end it was the political clout of the AFL-CIO which was the critical factor in defending the program, as has been the case for most of the history of the labor attache function. If they were not interested in continuing the labor program, it couldn't survive. Their support was absolutely essential and DOL's support was also useful. So it was a question then of just mobilizing these two major constituencies.

Q: Do you want to describe the period during the last three years, when things began to erode?

FREEMAN: Yes. It is interesting that throughout this time the Labor Attachï¿½ Program was challenged by all kinds of people, by ambassadors and by the [geographic] bureaus. Then two major things happened. One was that towards the end of the... I think I [should backtrack]. There was another move late in the Bush Administration to eliminate a considerable number of positions, not to eliminate the whole program, but to eliminate a considerable number of positions.

Q: When was this roughly?

FREEMAN: Let's say it was around 1990. This was the Bush Administration. I think most of these [proposed cuts] were generated on an ad hoc basis by the regional bureaus, particularly the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau (EAP), which came up with some positions it wanted to cut. For example, EAP wanted to cut its assistant labor attachï¿½ position [in Japan].

Let's go back [further]. One battle which comes to mind now was over India. This goes back to an earlier period. There was quite an ado over this one. Mike Armacost was the Under Secretary at the time, and the Ambassador was an old school Foreign Service Officer, whose name I don't recall. Even before he went out to post, he made it known that he didn't want a labor attachï¿½ in India. New Delhi had always been regarded by the AFL-CIO and the Department of Labor as an important labor post, certainly it was when Pat Moynihan had been Ambassador. I asked to meet with this Ambassador in Washington, but he declined my request. He also declined a request to meet with Tony Kern, who had been a deputy of mine at S/IL and who had already been assigned to Delhi as his labor attachï¿½. Then when the Ambassador got out to post, he soon came in with a formal notice of his intention to eliminate the position. I fought that one very long and very hard, and asked Armacost to intercede personally in this matter. Armacost also received a phone call from Lane Kirkland about this, as I recall. As Under Secretary for Political Affairs after Larry Eagleburger he inherited the responsibility for supervising S/IL and international labor affairs in the Secretary of State's office and it was his job to liaison with the President of the AFL-CIO on the Secretary's behalf, with my assistance. Had it not been for this responsibility, I'm sure Armacost's instinct would have been to back the Ambassador's wish. In the end, however, he made the Ambassador bite the bullet. Actually, he made a Solomonic-like compromise decision, agreeing to have the position downgraded from the senior grades but not eliminated. We didn't lose the position but we lost the grade. That was a serious enough matter because we needed to retain the limited number of senior labor positions we had worldwide in order to permit a few labor officers to get promoted into the senior grades from time to time, and this outcome in fact pissed me off greatly. But it was a half-victory that we had prevented the Ambassador from eliminating the position outright. I heard that he too came away quite pissed over this decision. He sent Armacost a message lamenting how far the Foreign Service had fallen when an Ambassador no longer had the authority on his own as Captain of his Ship to eliminate a position at his post when he deemed it of little use to him without fear of outside political pressure on the State Department.

Q: The position was downgraded to FSO-2?

FREEMAN: Probably. FSO-1 or FSO-2.

So we are now getting to the latter period. What happened in the latter period? Two things happened. One was that in the last year of the Bush Administration I was paid a call by somebody from "M" (Office of the Under Secretary for Management), who had this brilliant idea. As part of an overall reorganization plan for the Department, "M" proposed to eliminate many of the staff advisory positions that had grown up over the years and attached to the Secretary's Office, mine included. The idea was to merge S/IL with the Economic ("EB") Bureau. This was a part of the State Department reorganization proposal drafted in 2002 that was done by the State Department bureaucracy. M proposed putting labor (S/IL) together with economics [Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs]. I was adamantly opposed, of course, because I saw any attempt to remove S/IL from the Secretary's office as a move to downgrade the S/IL function. Realizing that this was not just aimed at S/IL but all the other similar positions that had been attached to the Secretary's office over the years and sensing this was a quite serious proposal, I tried to deflect the idea by arguing it wouldn't work. Mixing S/IL and EB was like mixing oil and water. We worked different sides of the fence. We were natural adversaries and couldn't be housed together. If S/IL were attached to the EB Bureau, U.S. labor interests would never get a fair hearing. If we really had to go somewhere else, I suggested, the only place in the Department we might fit would be the Human Rights Bureau (HA). After my conversation with the drafters, the M report was finished, but I never saw it and didn't hear more about what was in it for a time. I told Lane Kirkland about it, however, and he said, "Don't worry about it."

Then the Democrats won the elections, and the transition team came up with its own State Department reorganization plan, borrowing ideas from the study which had been done previously by M. Their idea was to create a new Democracy Bureau which would include democracy, human rights, and labor. Again, I was dead set against this, because I instinctively interpreted this as a downgrading not only of the labor function in the Department, but also of my own personal status as well. But of course I couldn't mount an effective counter campaign on these grounds. It would do no good to say my humble persona didn't particularly appreciate being downgraded, because that would get me nowhere. And I could only argue that the AFL-CIO would fight it, if indeed the AFL-CIO was prepared to fight it - which needed to be substantiated. A new Administration had been elected and it would be up to the new political team to decide, first of all, who they wanted in my position, and secondly, how they wanted to organize themselves. There was a certain degree of logic in having democracy, human rights, and labor together. My concern was that no matter at what level you put labor affairs organizationally in the State Department, labor was always going to end up last place at that level. This, because labor was just too much of an odd duck for the State Department. Too many people in the Department just could not fathom the relevance of labor affairs to U.S. foreign policy. So, if we had a choice between taking last place in the Secretary's Office or taking last place in an Assistant Secretary's Office, the former was far preferable. This is a non-brainer. At least you are at a higher level and this gives you somewhat greater clout.

Q: So you didn't call in the AFL-CIO or the Labor Department?

FREEMAN: Well, I didn't "call in" the Labor Department, frankly because this was an internal State Department organizational matter. I didn't think it their place to get involved and I frankly would have thought this to be disloyal to my own Department. I couldn't "call in" Lane Kirkland either, but merely called this to his attention. It was up to him to make known the AFL-CIO's considered position on this matter. Beyond that I wouldn't go because it wouldn't have been proper either. There was a certain minimal protocol to be followed here. Although I was serving in a political position, I was still a Foreign Service Officer and that implied a certain discipline. Also, practically speaking, this problem couldn't be fixed unless the AFL-CIO - or Congress - decisively weighed in with an extraordinary amount of determination and persistence. Perhaps, I could have done more on my own account to throw rocks in the way - to try to sabotage it. I could have openly opposed it on principle. I could have said, "No, I'm not going to accept this. Fire me." But that would not turn the decision around. I had a realistic sense of how this was likely to play out. I could count marbles. So my formal posture was one of cooperation with the new Administration as befitting a professional Foreign Service Officer, but I went to see [Under Secretary Timothy E.] Wirth very soon after he came on board. First of all, I wanted to let him know - because I knew the new Administration was likely to appoint its own person - that, while I was an FSO, I had been appointed with the approval of the AFL-CIO and there was a political connection to this post during its entire history. In fact, the mystique of the office was that it was the AFL-CIO's home in the State Department. The office was the AFL-CIO's window on the Department. At least, that was how it was thought of by some of the AFL-CIO people, and that had its pros and its cons.

My impression was that the new Administration team saw it more as a con. Wirth was solicitous of AFL-CIO views, but not oversolicitous. I'm not sure his first choice would have been to appoint somebody from the AFL-CIO to replace me in S/IL, or rather the new DRL Bureau, although it's certainly conceivable. On the other hand, the AFL-CIO had been an important factor in the election of Clinton, and Wirth needed to be open to this constituency. After he learned of the AFL-CIO's interest in the S/IL position, Wirth agreed to keep me on rather than coming up with a new appointee to replace me, probably after having consulted the AFL-CIO about this. But I'm fairly sure this was not his original intention. I could see that I surprised him and his staff when I briefed them on the AFL-CIO connection.

In the beginning of the new Clinton Administration, I reported directly to Wirth as he was part of the Secretary's office. I was still technically part of the Secretary's Office, so I was reporting to Wirth in that capacity. Wirth was Under Secretary for Global Affairs. Actually it wasn't called "Global Affairs" yet, because the proposed change required legislation. When John Shattuck was later appointed Assistant Secretary for the Human Rights (HA) Bureau, I came to report to Shattuck as it was expected that S/IL would soon merge with HA, and I then reported to Wirth via Shattuck. But the legislative act merging S/IL and HA into a new Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) under the supervision of a new Under Secretary for Global Affairs, had yet to be drafted and passed, and there was a question as to how the AFL-CIO would react. I left that up to Lane Kirkland. But I did not have the expectation that Lane would fight to the last ditch - to "die on his sword" so to speak - in order to keep the S/IL position in the Secretary's office, as opposed to allowing it to merge with the HA Bureau, so I didn't see any point in jumping off the diving board by myself into an empty pool. The AFL-CIO had too many other vital interests to expend its limited ammunition on this issue. I certainly was unhappy about it, but I went along as I had no other realistic option if I wanted to remain in the Department's top labor position, wherever it ended up in the structure.

Not that Lane didn't try. He certainly took a shot at it. Secretary Christopher accompanied by a number of his new top political appointees, with me present, met with Lane over lunch and told him that, although S/IL was technically in the Secretary's Office, this was merely pro forma, which was basically true; and that in fact S/IL was not in the inner circle, which it never was - never in the history of S/IL had it been in the inner circle of the Secretary's Office - and that therefore he, Christopher, felt that it made more sense to make the labor function operational by putting it at a bureau level and having the AFL-CIO work very closely with that bureau. So the proposed change was portrayed as strengthening the labor function.

Now, I took that as so much soft soap. Yes, there was something to be gained if S/IL could have been made more operational in fact, but in a Department where the operational capability lies principally in the geographic bureaus, the operational reach of a functional bureau like DRL can only be expected to go so far. On the other hand, taking full advantage of the fact that we were technically part of the Secretary's office, I was better able to develop a labor dimension to State Department policy in Eastern Europe, which we haven't discussed yet, beginning in the late 1980s. Also, with the cachet of the Secretary's office behind me, I was better able to defend the labor attache program from attempts by the regional geographic bureaus to cut labor positions abroad in order to satisfy downsizing requirements that were imposed on them by budget realities. In fact, I was better able to fight a lot of these labor attachï¿½ downsizings because I was attached to the Secretary of State's office.

That's an important part of the story. There was a moment when the Under Secretary for Management decided to go along with all these five or six eliminations that I mentioned to you earlier. He had decided against my recommendation. I went to Eagleburger's staff aides on it - Eagleburger at this time was Acting Secretary of State - and not only did Eagleburger personally overrule the Under Secretary for Management, but he penned a note to the Under Secretary as part of the official record that not only had he been overruled but that from that time forward Management was not to approve any further eliminations of labor attachï¿½ positions anywhere without personally consulting the Secretary of State. I have no doubt that this reflected the great personal respect and admiration Larry felt for Lane, Irving and their work abroad.

Q: What was the time frame for this?

FREEMAN: That was in the last year of the Bush Administration.

Q: 1992

FREEMAN: I believe so. And of course I kept this precedent fresh in everyone's mind when the Clinton administration came in, and I used it. And for a year, I was able to hold off a lot of these initiatives. Then we began to get new proposals for eliminating positions. So for about a year or so after Eagleburger had made this decision, lapping over into the initial months of the new Administration, nothing happened; there were no new proposals for cutting labor officer positions abroad. Nobody would dare do anything. The inspectors and all, they all kept their distance for about a year.

But I fully recognized this wouldn't last. Sooner or later this experience [between Eagleburger and M] would wear off and the "little gnats" would come back out of the woodwork again. Then we began getting proposals anew. My recollection of the exact chronology is hazy, but it may have been in this period, for example, that we got the proposal to eliminate the traditional (senior) labor officer positions in [Western] Europe in order to make room for new Embassy positions needed in Eastern Europe. At some point we were flooded more and more with proposals to cut labor positions, for example first downgrading the Labor Counselor position and then eliminating the labor position altogether in Paris. So really most of the losses which we sustained happened in the latter half of my stint at S/IL, with a temporary reprieve during the window represented by Larry Eagleburger's personal intervention in the last year of the Bush Administration. I would have to go back and check to be sure I'm right about that. But I would say that during my first seven or eight years as S/IL we did very well, and we were almost ahead of the game, because we created some new positions too. We began losing the overall strategic game, I think, when the [geographic] bureaus started to eliminate their own bureau labor advisor positions. That's when I began to lose my leverage. That was a critical loss, because I couldn't fight the system all by myself.

Q: Did this mean a transfer of power to the bureaus?

FREEMAN: No, insofar as personnel decisions are concerned, the primary authority has rested in the geographic bureaus now for a number of decades. Personnel issues such as assignments have been decentralized in the Department for several decades. What I'm speaking about is that traditionally in terms of the Department's labor program, there was a system whereby you had an S/IL reporting to the Secretary as his senior labor advisor, but in each of the [geographic] bureaus you also had a regional labor advisor serving the Assistant Secretary in charge of the respective regional bureaus. Now they didn't work for S/IL. They reported to their own bureaus, but S/IL had a certain degree of leeway to coordinate them even though S/IL didn't fund or control these positions. These positions were "owned" by and served the regional bureaus, but S/IL coordinated the overseas labor attache program through them. One of the things I did when I first came to the S/IL position was to hold weekly meetings of the regional labor advisors. When I arrived, there was an inspector's report on S/IL sitting on my desk with recommendations that I was to implement. Among these was the proposal that S/IL coordinate the Bureau labor advisors more. We began to hold weekly meetings of the Bureau labor advisors and to discuss a worldwide labor strategy, as I said earlier with the intent of working more closely with the AFL-CIO on a strategic, global basis. This produced more in the way of targeted instructions to labor attache posts generated by S/IL. But at some point, this effort began to erode because the interest of the regional bureau front offices in the labor program was declining. Then, at some stage in the perennial cost cutting efforts of the late 1980s, the bureaus were forced to cut positions and bureau after bureau identified and offered up their respective bureau labor advisor positions as among the most dispensable - EUR, AF, etc., and that played a key part in the later unraveling of the labor attache positions abroad. For a couple of years, we were able to hold things together even without the bureau labor advisors, but if you don't have officers assigned to the regional bureaus who are prepared to fight within their bureaus for the program, sooner or later the whole system is going to unravel.

So where were we? I can see that I'm going in circles.

Q: So when did you officially become Deputy Assistant Secretary and when did the reorganization take place?

FREEMAN: De facto probably around March or April 1993, but my title didn't actually change. I was still technically Special Assistant to the Secretary until Congressional consultation and action were completed. That took at least til the end of the year and I think even well into the next. But John Shattuck was on board by then as Assistant Secretary of the Human Rights Bureau pending the formal creation of the new DRL Bureau, and I was working for him de facto. I was even ejected one day from the office which S/IL had occupied. I was actually given less than 8 hours notice to clear out of the physical space we had on the 7th floor.

Q: That's all?

FREEMAN: Senator Wirth had to intervene personally to get it extended by a few hours. The GSOs in S/S were evidently happy to get rid of us. S/S unceremoniously kicked us out with just a few hours' notice. I was moved over to HA, which incidentally, from the point of view o"digs", probably has the worst physical lay-out in the building. It was a rabbit warren. Officers were stuffed into cubby holes and things. They had no room back there. HA was on the seventh floor, but they had to sacrifice space for the prestige of being on the seventh floor. It probably was a violation of fire regulations to have so many people stuffed into those offices up there. And the DAS [deputy assistant secretary] offices were fairly small, so there is no question from that point of view that the move was a step down. Then we suffered the further indignity that my staff people were physically separated from me. There was no room for them up there on the 7th floor and at first they were put on the first floor. The people who worked for me were moved physically five times in one year because of constant reorganization and refurbishing going on in the building.

Q: It must have been terribly disruptive.

FREEMAN: It was extremely demoralizing for them.

One other contribution which I ought to mention is the labor section of the human rights report.

Q: Yes, I was just going to ask you about worker rights and Eastern Europe. Do you want to describe how the worker rights issues became important?

FREEMAN: Yes. I'm trying to go back to that. I think we started around 1984. Even before the GSP law was amended to include worker rights for the first time, there had been enough happening around the world with regard to worker rights issues that I had a meeting with the HA reports staff about incorporating worker rights issues in their annual Human Rights Reports.

We started in 1984 - that was the first year - to include freedom of association and maybe collective bargaining, if I recall correctly. In fact, it was HA which took the initiative to ask for S/IL's and the Department of Labor's guidance and input and of course we were delighted, but HA jealously guarded their turf. They were in charge. It was their report, not ours. But we did get some worker rights issues included in the 1984 report and then shortly thereafter the GSP law was amended to actually mandate that worker rights be included.

Congress came up with its own list of five categories of worker rights they were interested in. The legislative history made it clear that Congress expected there would be a report on the degree to which foreign countries were living up to those rights, and at some stage it was suggested that this worker rights compliance reporting be folded into the annual Human Rights Report. This was insisted on by Congressman Pease and his staff aide Bill Goold in conversations with the HA Bureau. So that's how the workers rights report got formally incorporated into the Human Rights Report. But at first HA wanted worker rights issues to be melded into the overall country text on an ad hoc basis where it was most relevant, until Congress insisted that worker rights be given a separate section. This was during a period when Congressional committees made it clear that they didn't trust the State Department to report accurately on worker rights.

So the legislative history made it clear that Congressman Pease wanted the State Department and the Labor Department to separately report on the same issues. This on the assumption that the State Department would pull its punches and shade the facts in order not to jeopardize its foreign policy objectives, whereas the Labor Department could be better trusted to report labor rights violations more honestly. Labor would serve as a check on State. That was the implication.

I argued within the State Department that we shouldn't allow this perception to persist and that State should take the lead in demonstrating it was capable of calling it like it was when it came to reporting on worker rights violations abroad. So we inserted S/IL vigorously into the process as an additional step in the editing and clearance of the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and in fact ended up heavily editing some of the reports. HA sought the Labor Department's cooperation in drafting the worker rights concepts involved in greater detail and in the early years DOL also participated actively in the clearance process for the Country Reports. But at some point DOL became disenchanted because its editing contributions were often rejected by State's country desks as being either extraneous or tendentious, and DOL voluntarily decided to bow out - I believe on the assumption that Pease would become incensed and take away the worker rights reporting responsibility entirely from State and turn it over to DOL exclusively.

S/IL had its own approach. I decided on what points we wanted to see included in these reports. After reading the first set of drafts, I saw that many of the embassies did a very superficial job on the labor rights, as they often did in the early years on the Human Rights Report in general. I wanted to be sure that these [labor rights reports] were done well and that the State Department be recognized for doing a credible job. So for two or so months each year, our small S/IL office concentrated on going over these reports with a fine tooth comb. As we reviewed each Country Report draft, we would have at our fingertips all the relevant post's labor reporting over the previous year collected from our own files and pick out issues or events the Embassy itself had highlighted earlier in its own reporting which we thought important enough to be added to the human rights report draft. Then an extensive round of memos with the country desk, HA (and the Labor Department when it was involved in the process) would sometimes be needed to put across our views. When we were integrated into DRL, this process became even more institutionalized. We got to draft ourselves the labor part of the questionnaire that was sent out to the field each year kicking off the Human Rights Report drafting season. So I felt good that we were building something here. DOL had made the mistake of pulling out of the process and State's reputation improved on the Hill that it could do a credible job of worker rights reporting.

At some stage, however, HA decided S/IL was seeking to pack too much into the workers' rights part of the Human Rights Report and alleged we were including information on industrial relations rather than human rights issues. This was already at the end of the Bush Administration, and there were several political appointees, one Deputy Assistant Secretary of HA in particular, who was outraged, for example, that we had asked for reporting on the minimum wage. He said he didn't see the relevance of reporting whether countries had a minimum wage. Actually, I believe the core of his problem was that he was ideologically opposed to the concept of minimum wages in the first place. So HA tried to remove this from the report and I had to show HA that this was required by law. Minimum wage was one of the five worker rights categories specified by law. As a followup, HA wanted to keep to an absolute minimum what we had to say on the issue.

To make the report more meaningful and precise, I had asked HA to include in the questionnaire an instruction that each Embassy specify at what dollar equivalent level the minimum wage was actually set in its country. After the first year, we asked BLS [Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor] for its reaction and they said, "Well, we have gone over the dollar figures included in each country report and, more often than not, they are completely out of whack with our information." So then we insisted that each embassy report to Washington the minimum wage in the local currency as well as the dollar equivalent value, together with the specific date or period in which this particular exchange rate prevailed, not necessarily for inclusion of all these details in the Human Rights Report itself, but so that we would have an accurate reference point in case anyone challenged the figure.

Today, as we speak, the report is growing topsy turvy, and the volume gets thicker and thicker. There are always new human rights concepts which are coming along. Human rights is an area which is constantly being redefined and expanded. There are constant additions to the Human Rights Report. This puts pressure on HA, now DRL, to reduce the worker rights section even further to make more room for other, newer issues. I had that problem with the Bureau front office all the time I was in DRL. I am waiting to see what this year's report will look like.

Q: So far the labor rights section is pretty much the same as it has been for the last four or five years?

FREEMAN: The worker rights format hasn't changed because it was blessed by Congress as a result of the GSP legislative act, but DRL wants to cut down the number of lines spent on labor rights issues, so we'll have to see how that turns out. Anyway, I think it was a major accomplishment to get worker rights into the Human Rights Report in the first place and to have it established and accepted as a permanent feature of that report. There was actually one year the editors almost agreed that we would do worker rights as a separate volume, because the overall text had expanded so greatly it was in danger of exceeding the 1600 page or so limit that could be fit in one printed volume. DRL considered doing a second volume that would be devoted to worker rights and perhaps some other human rights issues as well. We were prepared to go along with that, but in the end DRL decided against it.

Q: Were you opposed to having a separate volume?

FREEMAN: No, no, but I had misgivings about it. Really, I was of two minds about it, because it had its pros and cons. The argument in favor was that we would have more space to devote to labor rights issues. The argument against was the inconvenience to the labor reader of having a second volume. A second volume would be less likely to be read. Relegating labor rights to the second volume might also connote it was of lesser importance. Moreover, one of the values of the Human Rights Report is that the first section of each country report is an overview of the political situation in the country, which is important for setting the context for the human rights report. If the worker rights section were separated from the main body of text on the country, a reader interested in worker rights would have the inconvenience of having to look up the other volume to get the political context right.

Incidentally, one of the things we did - and we put a lot of time in it although it was not always appreciated by HA - was that we would make sure that the worker rights section (Section 6) included the most up-to-date ILO pronouncements of the supervisory machinery, so that if the ILO condemned a country for worker rights' violations, we wanted to make sure that fact got into the report. Since the embassies were usually unfamiliar with the ILO's actions, that meant we actually had to draft this part ourselves in S/IL. Space being a major problem, we had to read many pages of ILO reports and condense that into one brief paragraph. Also, as I said earlier, there were problems over content. For example, HA might quarrel over there being more than the barest sentence on the occupational health and safety situation in the country, because HA viewed this issue as being far afield from mainstream human rights even if its inclusion was dictated by the Congress. I think some of this had to do with the traditional U.S. view that economic, social, and cultural rights were of lesser importance than political rights. The U.S. had traditionally tended to see economic and social rights as a propaganda field mined by the Soviets and their Third World allies and tended to shy away from this area.

Incidentally, when I refer to HA, it's a slip of the tongue. After a certain point in time, the HA Bureau became the DRL Bureau, but when I use "HA" here, I'm speaking about the old HA contracting team responsible for putting out the report under the direct supervision of the HA (or DRL) Assistant Secretary. I would have to think long and hard as to whether S/IL had an easier time continuing to strengthen the worker rights section of the report after we were merged with the HA Bureau into DRL. On the one hand, we were now integrated into DRL and our work on the report became more institutionalized. To get our foot in the door was no longer the problem, so from this point of view we were now pushing against an open door. On the other hand, the HA editing team resisted our efforts to put more detail into the worker rights section. From my viewpoint, the first few years of Embassy drafts of the section on worker rights (Section 6) tended to be very slim and superficial. They often tended to say the same thing, so it was actually difficult to distinguish between one country's report and another without referring back to the title page of the country report to see which was the country actually being discussed. I attempted to deal with this, for example, by at least inserting the name of the country's umbrella labor organization in each report, but the HA editors interpreted this as the opening wedge of an attempt on our part to get more extraneous industrial relations material into the report. That was not my intention. I was just trying to make the worker rights section of the report more credible by getting beyond vague standard constructions and inserting some detail to demonstrate that the State Department knew what it was talking about. More often than not, however, DRL Assistant Secretary Shattuck would back the editors rather than his labor team in these quarrels, because the overriding issue for the editors was the growing problem of space available in one volume in the face of ever increasing pressure from human rights groups and their Congressional supporters to expand the human rights topics to be covered in the report.

Q: Were you satisfied from the S/IL perspective with the division of labor between the ILO and the U.S. Government on the worker rights issue?

FREEMAN: Be more specific with your question, please.

Q: Well, I just wondered whether you felt that our worker rights reports adequately covered all the aspects of the worker rights issues as seen by the ILO?

FREEMAN: Well, I'm satisfied that the requirement to do an annual human rights report has compelled our embassies to do worker rights reporting which they otherwise might not have. And I am satisfied that the ILO staff seem to respect and appreciate the U.S. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices as a useful product. On the other hand, I'm not always sure that every country report we do is as accurate or comprehensive as it should be. Perhaps, I'm not answering your question but rather a related one. There is a kind of tug of war that goes on behind the scenes between the embassy, which after all represents all the interests which the U.S. has in that country and it needs to deal with the host government, and the State Department DRL bureau back home, which wants to make sure we do a credible job of reporting the abuses that take place. Taking the worker rights issue in the Malaysian electronics industry as an example, you will find that the EAP Bureau [East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau] is going to support its own embassy out there and what the embassy has to say, obviously. So there is a tug of war between EAP and DRL over what is to be said about Malaysia in the human rights report. On most such issues, the benefit of the doubt within the State Department often goes to the regional bureaus as they are the ultimate arbiter of information as to what goes on in their countries.

A certain amount of friction develops each year between the geographic bureaus and HA [now DRL] over the annual Human Rights Report. This reporting requirement is not universally loved by our Foreign Service. However, I found that S/IL had less of a problem with the regional bureaus over the factual situation concerning worker rights issues in a given country than HA did with these bureaus concerning the human rights situation in general. There were problems over our editing, but it was not usually over the factual situations themselves. Why? Because the sources of our edits were either the reporting over the previous year from our Embassies themselves or the ILO's reports which were generally respected for their balance and authoritativeness. Moreover, I was always circumspect in the way I would draft a criticism of the country, taking pains not to use inflammatory language and trying to be as objective as possible, taking into account the political or economic context in which the worker rights abuses were being committed. But that doesn't fully answer your question.

Q: I was wondering whether from the ILO perspective, does the ILO view the worker rights reporting here as a useful supplement or does it feel that the U.S. is trying to preempt its role in the worker rights field?

FREEMAN: Yes, okay. That's where I thought you might be headed.

Q: I didn't phrase it very well the first time.

FREEMAN: I frankly have never heard any grousing from the ILO staff about the fact that the State Department is reporting on worker rights situations abroad. I just have never heard that. I do know that the relevant staff in the ILO are vividly interested in our report. I can tell you that just two days ago the people at the ILO who are working on the Director General's Report on the Occupied Territories [West Bank and Gaza] were terribly anxious to see what the State Department had to say before they finished up their own report. So, they are interested in what the State Department has to say, as is normal.

What you are getting at, I think, is something else, and that is: Does the ILO appreciate the U.S. Government's unilateral supervising and police-keeping [efforts in the worker rights field]? That is another question. Not the reports so much as does the ILO...

Q: Does the ILO view the U.S. as preempting the ILO's role in the worker rights area?

FREEMAN:Right. And the answer is that traditionally staffers in the ILO - there is no official ILO position on this - see a certain degree of wry irony in the fact that the United States, a country which doesn't ratify ILO conventions, is passing judgment on everybody else!On the other hand, the fact that the U.S. attaches the importance it does to worker rights can't help but be viewed by the ILO staff as providing a degree of support to the ILO mission and this must be the source of some comfort. When the U.S. Government speaks, the ILO listens. And the U.S. interest in worker rights indirectly serves to reinforce the ILO's role, because there is a parallel or mutual interest here, even though there is no explicit coordination that goes on between the ILO and the U.S. The ILO has an obligation to help member country X improve its worker rights situation, and this it does through the public pronouncements of its tripartite supervisory machinery but also through a confidential process of dialogue with the government authorities. There is often a mutuality of U.S. and ILO interests in wanting to see the country's worker rights performance improved, although the ILO will not openly broadcast the fact that it is coordinating with the U.S. for fear of being accused of being a tool of the USG. On the other hand, the U.S. Ambassador may sometimes want the ILO to play a more active role. For example, our Ambassador in Jakarta might be concerned that the United States is overexposed in Indonesia, lecturing its leaders in public and threatening that country with loss of its bilateral GSP benefits if it doesn't improve its worker rights situation. He may fear the country will say to the U.S., "Fine. Terminate our GSP benefits and we won't be able to guarantee that U.S. companies will continue to be awarded prime contracts from our government agencies (which are not of insubstantial value) any longer." In this situation, the Ambassador might like to see the ILO serve as a multilateral cushion demonstrating that outside pressure for reform comes from the UN system and not just the U.S. alone. The Ambassador would likely want to see the Indonesian government accept ILO assistance aimed at helping it improve its worker rights performance and this way avoid the need for the unilateral imposition of U.S. economic sanctions against "his" country. That is, the Ambassador would be in a stronger position to argue with Washington that Indonesia was "taking steps" within the meaning of the GSP statute and therefore Indonesia's GSP benefits shouldn't be removed by virtue of the mere fact it had shown its good will in requesting ILO assistance. Usually in this kind of situation, the ILO finds it to be in its own interest to step up its technical advice and cooperation to this country and will therefore respond positively to the U.S. request, especially if the U.S. is willing to fund the extrabudgetary costs.

On the other hand, there is a bitter reaction by developing countries against any attempts by the U.S. to introduce labor rights/trade conditionality (trade sanctions for labor violations) at the multilateral level, for example in connection GATT/WTO, and this is a subject of much heated debate in ILO meetings. However, the U.S. bilateral or unilateral trade/labor conditionality programs such as GSP have not been raised as an issue in the ILO per se.

Q: Would you care to say a few things about your work in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union while you were S/IL. I think that was a very important aspect of your accomplishments as S/IL.

FREEMAN: Yes. The AFL-CIO developed a relationship with the Polish labor movement Solidarity, and we supported them. There were shipments of typewriters and printing machines into Poland, and S/IL before I came to this office and the U.S. labor counselors in key European posts played a supportive role on the margins helping getting this aid across the borders. During the martial law years, Solidarity maintained an exile office abroad in the ICFTU headquarters in Brussels and our labor attache in USEC provided whatever assistance he could, as did I from my S/IL office, always in close coordination with the AFL-CIO.

But then in 1988 or early 1989 I began watching the Soviet situation more carefully. More and more things were happening in the labor field in the Soviet Union, but at that time we didn't have any labor reporting from our Embassy. We didn't have a labor officer in Moscow. I developed the habit of perusing the voluminous FBIS [the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service] reports every morning, especially on the Soviet Union, and that was my major source of information. There was an awful lot of labor news being broadcast over Russian radio stations and this showed up in FBIS. Worker clubs - dissident worker clubs - were popping up all over the Soviet Union and there were many illegal strikes. But nothing coming out of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in the way of reporting about this, and I began getting agitated. So in the Spring of 1989 I sent a cable to Embassy Moscow requesting "country clearance" for a trip I proposed to take there to look at the labor situation firsthand, and I was shocked to get back a message saying "No". It was written in a rather insulting style. It said there was nothing S/IL could usefully do in the Soviet Union and so there was no point to my coming.

I learned subsequently that this was due mostly to resentment over the refusal of the AFL-CIO to have any dealings with the official "trade unions" in the Soviet Union. The rejection of my visit was partially a reflection of the way that the Embassy Political Section saw its role, which was that they were the experts - the Foreign Service's elite officers - dealing with the Soviet threat. For them, the highest priority United States interest in the Soviet Union was arms control negotiations, saving humanity from a nuclear Third World War and everything else paled in comparison. To get the Soviets to negotiate arms control with us, it was necessary to deal with and cultivate the Soviet bureaucracy, the Communist elite and the government elite.

I subsequently learned that the initially negative response to my clearance request was a reaction to the role I had played in S/IL standing in the way of the Department's granting visas to Soviet "trade unionists" whom the Embassy had nominated as official exchange visitors to the United States. The Baker Amendment to Section 28 of the visa law authorized the denial of visas to "so-called labor leaders from Communist or other totalitarian countries," and it fell to me to be the keeper at the gate. The AFL-CIO had lobbied successfully for this legal provision and the AFL-CIO expected S/IL, as its liaison point in the State Department, to enforce this provision. It was fairly easy for me to spot the leaders of the AUCCTU (the official Soviet Labor Front) on the proposed visa lists and I would discover most of these initiatives and effectively thwart them by interposing objections based on the law. Apparently, this had gained me a reputation in our Embassy as being something of a spoiler. Why? What was I spoiling? I was making it a tiny fraction harder for the Embassy to carry out one of its objectives. Here was some obscure office in the Department dealing with labor affairs undermining Embassy efforts to invite one subelement of the Soviet Party elite to official visits to the United States in the interest of easing tensions and bettering relations with the USSR. The Soviets reacted by making some propaganda hay over this, accusing the U.S. of unnecessarily stirring up Cold War tensions. This is why the Embassy responded so negatively to my proposal to visit Moscow. This was around May or June of 1989, if I'm not mistaken.

Then in June, there was an outburst of strikes in the coal mines throughout the Soviet Union of a magnitude not seen since the 1920s. It was the Political Section that had drafted the cable rejecting my proposal to visit the USSR. I only learned this when I was finally able to travel to the USSR in September. When I arrived in Moscow I was told by the Embassy's Economic Section that the initial objections had come from the Political Section. In their conversations with me, the economic officers faulted their colleagues from the Political Section for having allowed their arms control priority interest to blind them from recognizing the potential of the Soviet empire to implode - as noble and overriding an objective that promoting arms control and preventing World War III might be. Fortuitously, there were at this point some new people assigned to the Economic Section, who had served outside of Eastern Europe and understood the importance of civil society and NGOs. And so within the Embassy it was the economic officers who had argued for my coming there. Meanwhile, I had complained to Deputy Assistant Secretary Vershbow in EUR. It took me three months, but I got EUR to reverse the Embassy's rejection, and I arrived in Moscow three months after the coal strikes had started. By that time, the Soviet Government was trying to deal with the mine situation by coopting the strike leaders, some of whom had been elected and were serving as deputies in the Duma.

Nevertheless, I got there fairly early in the aftermath of the strikes. The Embassy had already sent an economic officer on an exploratory visit to the mines in the Ukraine. I didn't get there in time for this, but the Economic Section organized another Embassy visit to the Ukraine when I arrived in Moscow in September. The Economic Section also agreed to designate one of its officers as a labor attache and, accompanied by him, I visited the Don[y]etsk region. This was an excellent officer named Mike Gfoeller, and his boss, the Economic Counselor, Harry Blaney, was superb in getting the Embassy to support all of this. They were pleased to have me because I was also opening up opportunities for the Economic Section to do exciting contact work and reporting which ordinarily would have fallen to the Political Section.

Q: Doing grass-roots political work.

FREEMAN: Exactly. Here's the political section declining to do this, and the Economic Section now has the opportunity to do political reporting. The Economic Section was delighted.

Q: Did the AFL-CIO at this time go along with this effort? At what time did they give their support?

FREEMAN: No. They were not involved in the beginning, but they came in shortly thereafter. They picked up on it right after that.

Q: As soon as the miners started showing some independence?

FREEMAN: Yes, as soon as the miners... Well, if my recollection of the sequencing is correct, we piqued the AFL-CIO's interest by bringing an all-USSR group of coal strike leaders to the U.S. under a USIA leader grant and having this visit programmed by the AFL-CIO's FTUI institute. This group was identified following the initial trips I made to the Donbass in the Ukraine and Novokun[y]etsk in the Kuzbass of Western Siberia. S/IL then worked with the Embassy and USIA to bring over a group of something like 15-20 mine strike leaders from all over the Soviet Union as leader grantees to the United States. They were selected not only from the Donbass and Kuzbass, but also Karaganda in Kazakhstan, Norilsk in the Arctic and Vladivostok on the Pacific. This was a large number and USIA was very helpful. Fifteen Soviet miners got off the plane in Dulles, and we had them programmed by FTUI and the United Mine Workers. The UMWA at that time was in the midst of its own strike against the Pittston mining company, and the American coal miners were running around in their combat fatigues as though they were ready to start a revolution themselves in the United States. These two groups were made for each other. By this time, Irving Brown had passed away. But Lane Kirkland, the President of the AFL-CIO, and Rich Trumka, President of the UMWA, took a personal interest in these visitors and developed a friendship with them.

I made several trips to the USSR over the next few years and had fabulous meetings in Donetsk on each occasion. During this period the miners had taken over the city, and the mayor was largely coopted by the miners. He was an apparatchik and not happy about it, but the miners were ready to wreak havoc if the mayor didn't follow their line. And the state mine enterprise, the mine company, went along with the mineworkers. In fact, my impression was that the strike leaders and the managers of the state mining enterprises in the Donbass worked together against the Coal Mining Ministry in Moscow. By the time I visited Donetsk a second time in 1990 to attend the founding congress of the new independent miners unions, AFL-CIO representatives such as Dick Wilson were also there and already providing advice to the mineworkers. On this visit, I was met at the airport by mineworkers, virtually all of whom were veterans of the Afghanistan War. They wore an open collar Soviet Army fatigue uniform and underneath was a tee shirt that looked like the old "Popeye the Sailor" shirt, a horizontally striped navy-style shirt. They formed a kind of honor guard for me at the airport. They put me in the mayor's limo for the trip into town and it was clear that the mayor had been imposed upon against his will to transport me and serve as my host.

On my first visit to Donetsk the year before, there was a meeting arranged for me and my Embassy escorts with the resident KGB officer, local party representatives, the press, and a number of the mineworkers. I decided to be very hard line on that occasion, and I made a statement there in which I strongly criticized the Soviet regime for violating workers rights, miners rights. The fact of my visit was reported in the press, but what I had to say was censored.

Q: Did the Embassy censor it?

FREEMAN: No, the Soviets. [The official trade union newspaper] Trud or whatever it was, later wrote a piece attacking me. That article got regurgitated many times. I felt honored by this article which wildly accused me of being part of some CIA plot to overthrow the Soviet regime by getting the Ukraine to secede from the USSR.

Q: A pretty powerful guy!

FREEMAN: This was just the way they explained away my visit for their propaganda mill, but undoubtedly this got their goat. They misspelled my name, and they had my title wrong, too. They listed my title, I think deliberately, as the "Trade Union Under Secretary" in the State Department. And the article said something like, "These Americans talk about freedom of association, yet here's a U.S. Government official assigned in the State Department to controlling or manipulating the world's trade unions in the service of U.S. interests. So much for American hypocrisy." That's how they portrayed my position. Anyway, I had a fantastic time. The mineworkers went way out to host me on all my visits there. Then, as I said, we invited about 15 selected strike leaders from throughout the Soviet Union to come to the United States. I did not accompany them on their travels in the U.S., although I would have liked to. We had them go down to the area of the Pittston company mines, where our miners were having their own strike. It was in Kentucky or somewhere. The UMWA hosted this part of the visit, and the Soviet miners told us later that this experience was like being back home for them. There was one guy, for example, who was a native Kazakh, a Muslim, and his Russian colleagues didn't like him very much. In fact, some alleged to me privately that he was a government plant. There was some ethnic prejudice, I think, within the miners' group there. But this guy told me that he just loved going to Kentucky or wherever it was, West Virginia maybe. First of all, the mountainous terrain looked familiar and our mountain people reminded him of his own people, he said. The Americans took the Soviet miners into their homes, and they all had their shotguns up over the fireplace. The American hosts were all (U.S.) Army vets also; they all liked to go hunting; they all liked getting drunk on the locally brewed stuff; and they had similar jobs in the mines. It was a love feast between the Russians and their American hosts. Later, the Kazakh asked if he could make a special visit by himself to a U.S. community adjacent to a missile launch test site out West. He claimed to be involved in an independence movement back home in Kazakhstan in the immediate vicinity of the Soviet missile launch site in Semipalatinsk protesting inadequate Soviet measures to protect the environment. He said he wanted to see what measures a civilian town nearby a U.S. test site took to ensure against elevated levels of radioactivity affecting the local populace so that he could report this to the protest movement back home. His request heightened our suspicions that he might indeed be a government plant, but after duly consulting the related U.S. agencies, we allowed him to make this visit, although "very well accompanied" by an officer from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Nothing untoward happened during his visit, but he later commented on how pleased he was by our openness.

I made it a point to explain to these visitors the nature of my job and of the relationship between the U.S. Government and the American labor movement. I described our cooperation with the AFL-CIO. I wanted them to understand that I was not, as in their system, somebody in the government who was there to control the trade unions. Quite the contrary, I was there to see that the USG took into account the interests of the trade unions in American foreign policy. The visit had a tremendous impact on the group and I believe it was a smashing success. The following year we tried to get a second group together, but USIA had other fish to fry by then and couldn't devote the same number of grants for Soviet mineworkers.

Some time after the visit of the strike leaders to the U.S., the AFL-CIO's FTUI opened an office iMoscow and later in Almaty in Kazakhstan and assigned advisers there to help promote an independent trade union in the USSR. The AFL-CIO office in Kiev may have actually opened earlier, I don't recall now, but there's no doubt that the coal miners strike was an important impetus behind the AFL-CIO's decision to help support the independent union movement in the USSR. I believe that this cultivation of the miner strike leaders is a vivid illustration of how the State Department labor program serves U.S. interests. The coal miners strikes of 1989 helped bring the Soviet system down and led to the end of the Cold War. Our reaching out to these strike leaders strengthened their stature among the mineworkers, helped them to consolidate their positions and to convert the strike committees into an independent miners union, which in turn helped to undermine the Communist power structure. Later, with the support of former Secretary of Labor Bill Usery, my deputy in S/IL, Bill Meagher, developed a program to further empower the new independent miners union by bringing U.S. technical assistance to the mining districts with the aim of helping the USSR coal industry survive the transition to a market system and global competition. We knew that the Soviet coal industry was in decline and we wanted to bring experts from the U.S. to the USSR who had experience promoting new local economic activity in mining communities when mines failed in the U.S. This program helped with mine safety issues, but it did not contribute to any major breakthroughs in terms of creating new substitute industries in the USSR mining communities, so far as I know. The old and relatively costly coal mines of Russia and the Ukraine are not very competitive in the world market. The miners' standard of living has declined since the collapse of the Soviet regime and the independent miners union has not continued to grow. It has not maintained the promise it showed at the time of the 1989 strike. In many cases, it is the former Communist nomenklatura (party bureaucrats) who have benefitted most from the limited privatization of the state enterprises, as many have now converted themselves into owners and managers. In our efforts to help the independent miners and other new unions, it was not our aim to bring down the Soviet system so that workers could now be exploited by a new capitalist system. But the fact is that the workers of the former USSR have not fared so well economically under the transition. None of this, however, detracts from the wisdom of the State Department's maintaining a labor program. To the contrary, I believe the USSR experience demonstrates the great value of the Department's continuing a program which tracks the labor implications of political and economic developments abroad and opportunely takes initiatives in the labor field to support U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Beyond the Soviet Union, I traveled a lot to other countries in Eastern Europe. I was in East Germany and taken around by IGMetal.

Q: Was it the East German Frei Deutsche Gewerkshaftsbund (FDGB)?

FREEMAN: No, the FRG Metalworkers.

Q: The West German Metalworkers?

FREEMAN: Yes. The West German Metalworkers had a few representatives in East Germany at that time, who were there trying to establish links with the East German metalworkers. Their aim was to extend the West German social democratic-controlled unions into East Germany. Initially, they were trying to get the old Communist Party leadership out and to work with a new generation of younger communists (who now called themselves "social democrats"), but they decided they couldn't work with them. Then of course the Wall came down, and the whole system just collapsed. The DGB just took over the trade unions in East Germany. I also went to Leipzig, and we had some meetings there.

Something happened on that trip which was especially noteworthy and a similar experience occurred on a separate visit to the USSR. During a visit to East Germany, we passed by the trade union school outside of Berlin, in Bernau I believe, which had been one of the training sites used by the WFTU [World Federation of Trade Unions]. That was fun, because by this time the school seemed to be in the hands of DGB people, or at least Social Democrats from West Germany.

The other similar incident I wanted to mention was, I think, on one of the later trips I made to the USSR when we were invited to a birthday party in Moscow. One of the problems of working with the new independent miners in Russia was that the leadership kept changing. They seemed unable to work well with each other, and no sooner was a leader selected than there would be a little coup against him and he would get replaced, which reminded me of the Latin American unions. So by the time of this trip to the USSR there was already a second generation independent mine worker leader in place. He was not one of the guys I had met the first time around. He was the leader of the whole Soviet NPG, as it was called, that is the independent mineworkers union confederation for the CIS. He invited me to a small birthday party in his honor, and he organized this in the Sputnik Hotel just down the street from the Soviet AUCCTU (All Union Central Council of Trade Unions) headquarters building in Moscow out on Leningradsky Prospekt. The hotel was owned by the AUCCTU. I had read about this place, because this was where all the third world labor leaders used to be holed up when they were invited by the AUCCTU to visit Moscow. So we were invited to this place by an independent labor leader. This was at a time when the Communists were still running the hotel, but they were too weak to object, so to speak. And this guy was showing off by having Americans prominently in attendance at his birthday party in their hotel, which I suppose he had a perfect right to do because he was still a member of the AUCCTU himself. This was still during the Gorbachev period, an ambivalent transition stage, with the old and the new labor leadership coexisting and not in open combat with each other.

Q: Or comfortable with the other side.

FREEMAN: Certainly not comfortable with the other side, and in this atmosphere I and my Embassy escorts were invited to a private party in this hotel which was the hotel of the Soviet labor unions. At one point, I got up from the table to look around and walked through a photo gallery. They had pictures up on the wall of all the visitors who had stayed there, and then it dawned on me. This was the place where all the trade union leaders from the Third World invited to Moscow for training by the AUCCTU stayed! It was a moment of triumph to be invited to this place by an independent trade union leader. It registered on me that my presence there that evening symbolized that we had won the labor part of the Cold War. You know that the Communists' ideology called for them to seize power worldwide through the "dictatorship of the proletariat", but we were ending up beating them at their own game by helping their own trade unions dismantle the Soviet system.

Q: This was 1989?

FREEMAN: No, it was later. The Soviet system had already begun to collapse, but this was a symbolic confirmation, so to speak, of our victory in winning the labor dimension of the Cold War. Around this time, perhaps a bit later, we received a rather dramatic cable from our labor attache in Moscow reporting a meeting he had with the international affairs head of the official Soviet AUCCTU in which the latter acknowledged that the U.S. had won the Cold War and that the AFL-CIO, with USG support, had defeated the USSR in the global political struggle for leadership of the world's trade union movement. I made a special ("sanitized") copy of that cable for Lane Kirkland and he pocketed it as his personal prize, beaming from ear to ear.Q: Did you also promote exchange programs with the other Eastern European countries? Poland? Hungary?

FREEMAN: Yes, representatives from the new independent trade unions throughout Eastern Europe were invited on visits to the U.S., but I can't say that I had such a direct role in them as I had in the Soviet Union. Our embassies there were doing that. Although I believe the visits I made early on to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia (before the split), Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania helped to stimulate our embassies' interest in the new independent unions then springing up. In Bulgaria, I was special guest and keynoter at the inaugural congress of the independent Podkrepa union. Of course, the AFL-CIO had been involved in Poland since the early 1980s and it also took a special, early interest in Hungary, and soon it was developing programs in virtually all of Eastern Europe. One thing I did, though, was to get some funding together and convince the AFL-CIO to sponsor the first time meeting ever of new trade union leaders from throughout the East Bloc to discuss economic transition issues common to all of them. The meeting was held in Warsaw. We worked closely with the AFL-CIO. We suggested the meeting to them and gave them some seed funding for it. They paid for the rest themselves and ran the program. They organized it at an inexpensive workers' hotel near the airport in Warsaw. We had over fifty people there. Solidarity co-sponsored it, and the program actually consisted of the Solidarity people telling the Russians and others about the transition problems which they had experienced, because they were a year or more ahead of the Russians and the rest of East Europe. Russian was the lingua franca for that meeting. It was the one common language they all knew. They talked about their experiences in dealing with the difficult transition to political democracy and a market economy. The U.S. Ambassador to Poland gave opening remarks and we had speakers from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to describe structural adjustment, and what the East European labor unions needed to do if they hoped to survive in the structural adjustment period. It was the first time independent labor leaders from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had ever gotten together with the AFL-CIO in one conference like that. The same people had met ad hoc, for example, at the Solidarity Congress, but this was their first [joint] meeting.

Q: Did you also send the Labor Attachï¿½ from the American Embassy in Warsaw?

FREEMAN: Yes, of course and I think we also brought some labor attachï¿½s to the meeting from our embassies in Western Europe.

Q: Okay. Are there other things you would like to discuss?

FREEMAN: Not at the moment, thank you.

Q: Would you care to conclude then with a few comments on where you think the labor program is going in the near future?

FREEMAN: Well, I am sorry to say the labor program is in danger of being eliminated. That's because we have a combination of changing interests overseas and a tremendous budget crunch. I think I said before that the labor program has never been fully appreciated in the State Department during the entire time that we had a labor program. And it's interesting that when the Clinton Administration came in, some of the career people in the bureaucracy, not necessarily the new political appointees, said, "Well, yes, we suppose that the Labor Attachï¿½ Program played a useful role in the Cold War - even though all during that time the same kind of people were fighting that role. The new administration came in and some of the career people were thinking, "Well, maybe there was a role that labor played. Yes, they had a role to play. But now the Cold War is over, so we don't need the labor program any more."

I really haven't given you the full flavor of our experience during the roughly eighteen month period of S/IL's transition into DRL. This was an unhappy time because I was essentially stuck to my desk, mostly drafting goals and objectives papers for what would be the "L" part of the new DRL Bureau. And on top of that, we had to defend the Labor Attachï¿½ program, because another round of questions was beginning to be asked about the relevance of the program in the modern age. So I spent the better part of a year drafting a new rationale for the Labor Attachï¿½ Program in the post-Cold War era and getting it cleared through the system, not only within the State Department but also with the Labor Department and with the AFL-CIO. Where we came out was that one way to preserve the program was to broaden the labor function and make the labor attachï¿½ the DRL officer at post. Now, that was more Under Secretary Tim Wirth's idea than mine. In fact, he originally wanted to go a step further and make the labor officer the "G" officer in the Embassy. Tim Wirth had an expansive idea about the importance of global or multilateral affairs, that this would eventually require the establishment of an entire global affairs section in our embassies. As there were labor attachï¿½s already stationed abroad, he thought they could serve as a core around which to build the global section in the embassies. At the very least, they should immediately take on the DRL function, that is democracy and human rights as well as labor.

Lane Kirkland did not like that idea, because he felt it would dilute the labor function. There were also objections from other parts of the DRL Bureau, which didn't want the "labor tail" to be wagging the "human rights/democracy dog," so to speak. In the end, we stopped short of recommending the formal establishment of a DRL officer, instead suggesting that our embassies create a democracy and human rights committee and that the labor officer be part of this. We said that the labor officer was the "civil society officer" and should work with all the democratic NGOs in the country to promote democracy. He should start with the labor NGOs, that is the unions, and encourage them to promote pluralistic democracy by working with other parts of civil society - environmental NGOs, teachers and students - and building outward from there.

Unfortunately, the Department was under pressure at this same time to consolidate its posts abroad, even to close the smaller embassies in order to save money. Now, at the current time (1995), there is even a proposal to terminate the four cones and consolidate them into two tracks, one for administrative-consular officers and the other a combined substantive track. All your substantive officers - political, economic, and everybody else - would be in that track. These people therefore would have to be generalists. You cannot have specialists in the Foreign Service of the future. Well, labor officers are specialists, so if you get rid of all specialists, that is the end of the Labor Attachï¿½ Program. Hence my conclusion that the future of the labor program is now in question.

There is a general view in the Management area that the State Department can no longer afford to have specialists like this. According to this view, there may be an overseas post here or there which perhaps should keep its labor officer position because of the special importance of labor in that particular country, but we don't need 45 or 46 labor-designated posts around the world - which is what the number was when I left the Service.

My view is that it would be a shame if we are forced to go in this direction. We are a Foreign Service that is becoming little more than a service station for the other USG agencies abroad. You walk into an American embassy overseas today, and what do you see? At the front door, it says: Treasury Attachï¿½ this way; Commercial Attachï¿½ up on the second floor; Defense Attachï¿½, third floor; USIA, et cetera. And the State Department is a smaller and smaller part of the Foreign Service. What does the State Department do? It is the GSO for the others. The function of the State Department is to provide proper housing for the Treasury Attachï¿½ and the Commercial Attachï¿½ and, when a Congressman comes to town, we do his itinerary for him and serve as tour guide. That's what the Foreign Service is today. I believe we are headed more and more in this direction. And that is what I mean by "generalist." You need a generalist to carry the bags of a Congressman. We are going back to the 1930s and 1940s, or earlier, when we had a much smaller Foreign Service manned by generalist officers. But I say that even if we do go back to the old Foreign Service, there will still be a need for somebody on the Embassy staff who maintains contact with grass-roots organizations and has a feel for what is going on with the people. We need an early warning system for potential shifts in popular opinion that could adversely affect U.S. interests. An officer who is familiar with labor issues and able to mingle with the local workers is the ideal person to do this.

Q: Would you like to close with a few comments on your retirement and your new work here in the Washington Office of the International Labor Organization?

FREEMAN: Well, I retired on October 31, 1994, and the very next day took over this job as Director of the ILO Office in Washington, which is responsible for the United States. Essentially it is a liaison and public relations office. We liaise with the American tripartite community which is represented in the ILO, that is the U.S. Government agencies such as the White House and the State, Labor and Commerce Departments, the AFL-CIO, and the U.S. business association which represents the American employers in this organization. Also, the Congress of course.

As you know, we have a Congress which is questioning whether the U.S. is overexposed abroad and the American public has the misconception that we are spending billions and billions of dollars on foreign aid. The actual amount the U.S. spends on foreign aid is a tiny fraction of what the public perceives to be the total and the public does not understand how foreign aid promotes U.S. interests overseas and in the United States. Seventy-five percent of this money flows back into the United States economy. Most of our aid is technical assistance in the form of contracts to American citizens and entities. There is also a lack of understanding as to what it means to be living in a new global economy. It used to be that when the United States sneezed, Mexico caught a cold. Now, a financial crisis in Mexico has an impact on world financial markets, including that of the U.S.

Q: And the international financial markets collapse.

FREEMAN: That's right. When financial markets collapse, American stockholders can be left holding the bag. The job of our office is to demonstrate to American policy makers and opinion-molders how the ILO is relevant to U.S. interests in the age of economic globalization. The ILO basically is an organization that is working to raise labor standards overseas and to create a more level playing field in terms of basic worker rights. This supports United States interests, because it means fewer jobs will go overseas if we can raise labor standards in the countries that trade with the U.S. where the standards are lower than ours. The basic function of the ILO is to help its member countries raise their standards.

Another part of our job is to work with the Bretton Woods institutions because we want to make sure there is a labor and social dimension in the lending policies of the international financial institutions. Most countries have to undergo wrenching economic reform in order to be able to compete in the new world economy. The IMF, with the U.S. Treasury behind it, requires that these countries take "strong medicine" in the form of structural adjustment programs if they are to continue receiving assistance from the IMF. Sometimes these programs actually do more harm than good. Even in the best of cases the belt tightening is especially hard on the workers - the burden falls largely on the workers - and there is a bitter reaction, occasionally leading to riots and rebellion. We think it is important for governments undergoing structural adjustment programs to consult with their trade unions, to at least gain their understanding of why the reform is necessary and to get their views, and their support if possible, as to how the adjustment might be carried out with less pain for the workers, for example, through better social safety nets, training programs and social pacts. And so what the ILO wants to see the Bretton Woods institutions adopt are policies which take into account and accommodate the social concerns of the populations that have to adjust structurally in order to survive.

Q: Very good. Any last comments you would like to make?

FREEMAN: No, I have nothing more.

Q: I want to thank you very much, Tony, for giving an interview to the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. This interview is a very important addition to our collective knowledge.

FREEMAN: I do expect you will allow me to censor anything I've said which I shouldn't have.

Q: Yes, you will have an opportunity to review the draft transcript. Thank you very much.

FREEMAN: Okay. Thank you, Don.

***

Freeman postscript, December 28, 2003 - further amended February 5, 2004:

After duly receiving the draft transcript from Don Kienzle, I put it away for safe-keeping in a drawer in the Washington ILO Office, where I'm sorry to say it gathered dust until the middle of 2003. I retired from the ILO in July. Thanks to Don, I retrieved another copy and have finally reviewed it, making an effort to put a better fix on some of the names, dates, and time sequences I was hazy about, correct errors of fact and clarify imprecise statements where I could, aided by the few reference books and materials I still have on hand from the period of my tours of duty. Two of the problems I find with the oral history technique is (1) it depends on the ability of the interviewee to accurately reconstruct details from memory - a capacity which in my case after so many years I have less than 100% self-confidence in - and (2) the interviewee may not have had a total knowledge - a 360 degree-wide vision - of all the events and policies he is describing even at the time that they took place. Having just recently had an opportunity to peruse US Embassy-Buenos Aires cables from the 1976-1980 period on the Internet, I cannot emphasize these caveats enough. There are many details which I've forgotten and I also recognize that I didn't have perfect vision of all that was going on even during the time they were taking place.

I've tried to be as objective as possible and have been quite frank about the mistakes I made over the years. There are some issues I could have even spent more time on, such as the problems of bureaucratic rivalry between State and Labor Departments on international labor issues; the cooperation I received from labor attaches of other countries, particularly the British (an attache program that is now largely defunct) and the Germans; and my observations concerning international labor as a subject of intelligence value or interest during the Cold War. There are plenty more anecdotes, including some more vignettes about Irving Brown, I could have offered. I could have cited some further S/IL initiatives of note, such as a successful effort to get funding for an AAFLI (the AFL-CIO's Asian) program to resettle ex-leftist insurgents in the Philippines in kibbutz-like farming-fishing villages where they could organize in self-defense units to protect themselves from the guerrilla bands from which they had defected, several visits to South Africa to develop better relations with COSATU, and an effort to encourage a cooperative relationship between the Israeli Histadrut and an incipient Palestinian trade union in order to increase employment prospects for Palestinians. I should also have mentioned earlier the booklet I edited early in my time as S/IL, entitled Primer on the International Trade Union Movement, which was done in response to a set of recommendations from an IG desk audit of the S/IL office and was intended to serve as a handy reference guide for our Embassy Labor Attaches abroad. There are, frankly, some sensitive issues I skirted, but I've answered the questions Don put to me faithfully and the inclusion of any further experiences, I don't think, would change the essence or thrust of the judgments I've offered here. And this, notwithstanding my recognition that some of my recollections may be faulty in detail. I'm sure that I've jumbled up some details, for example the time sequences of the various bureaucratic RIF proposals we had to deal with during the 10-year period I was in S/IL/DRL. I will add here that while I was in S/IL, I persuaded INR to commission a study on the importance of labor issues in the Cold War - particularly to analyze clandestine Soviet activities in the international labor field. One unstated aim for doing this was to use it as justification for defending the U.S. labor attache program and other U.S. labor activities. The contract writer (in two reports), however, concluded there was no serious threat to U.S. interests from Soviet initiatives in the international labor field. I was much disappointed by this assessment and couldn't help but conclude that the analyst (Eric Willenz) had not tapped into reporting which I thought existed. I continue to believe that the coal strikes in the USSR helped to bring the Soviet empire down. A shipyard electrician named Walesa jumped a fence in Gdansk, Poland, to lead a strike in 1980, which ignited the spark that led to the collapse of the empire. The coal strikes of 1989 in the Soviet Union added the final touches to the breakdown of the system in the metropolis itself. I also continue to believe that the U.S. interest in promoting democracy and human rights and market economy principles abroad and the key issues surrounding the impact of free trade and international financial flows on jobs and labor standards in the context of an ever more globalized world economy are reasons why the U.S. needs to continue having labor officers in our Embassies. For further reference on this subject, I would cite a report done by Don Kienzle of a seminar organized by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on April 27, 1995, entitled Historical Lessons of Labor Diplomacy.

I should also mention that thanks to an initiative taken by the President of the Bricklayers Union, Jack Joyce, in which he stimulated an interest at long last in the AFL-CIO Executive Council to press the Executive Branch effectively as to its intentions regarding the future of the labor attache program, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright established an Advisory Committee on Labor Diplomacy to the Secretary of State and the President of the United States in May 1999. The committee is chaired by Tom Donahue, and includes AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and other AFL-CIO officials, former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall, a representative from the corporate world (Frank Doyle), and myself (technically because of my ILO connection, but really because of my prior S/IL and Department experience). This committee was established by the Clinton Administration and has been continued by the Bush Administration. It has submitted two reports to date, one entitleA World of Decent Work: Labor Diplomacy for the New Century, published in September 2000, and the other, Labor Diplomacy: In the Service of Democracy and Security, published December 31, 2001. The committee is currently at work on a set of recommendations the Administration should consider for dealing with labor problems in Arab and Muslim countries in the wake of 9/11. I believe this committee was created in the nick of time and that its mere existence has helped short-circuit any immediate plans there may have been for further downsizing or eliminating the Department's labor attache program. Also, since my leaving the Department I've noticed - beginning with Secretary Albright and continued by Secretary Powell - a welcome turnaround from the past 7th floor practice of playing dead in the intra- Administration budget wars to one of defending the need for and fighting for a more robust State Department budget. At one point, we even heard this led to a situation in which there were positions overseas that had been budgeted but unfilled numbering in the hundreds. My guess is that this overall improved budget situation has been a significant factor in reducing the pressure for further reductions of the labor officer positions and interrupting the drift towards elimination of the Department's labor officer program. Given the new looming federal budget deficit that has just reappeared, State's budget situation could very well change again for the worse, of course, but these positive developments helped to reverse the decline and even restore the total number of overseas labor-designated positions in the Foreign Service back up to about 49 or 50, which is about 10 down from the total number of these positions we had in the early 1980s. At the current time the number of labor positions has been stabilized now at about that level, at least for the time-being. For further insights into this subject the first person I would consult would be Alden Irons.

End of interview